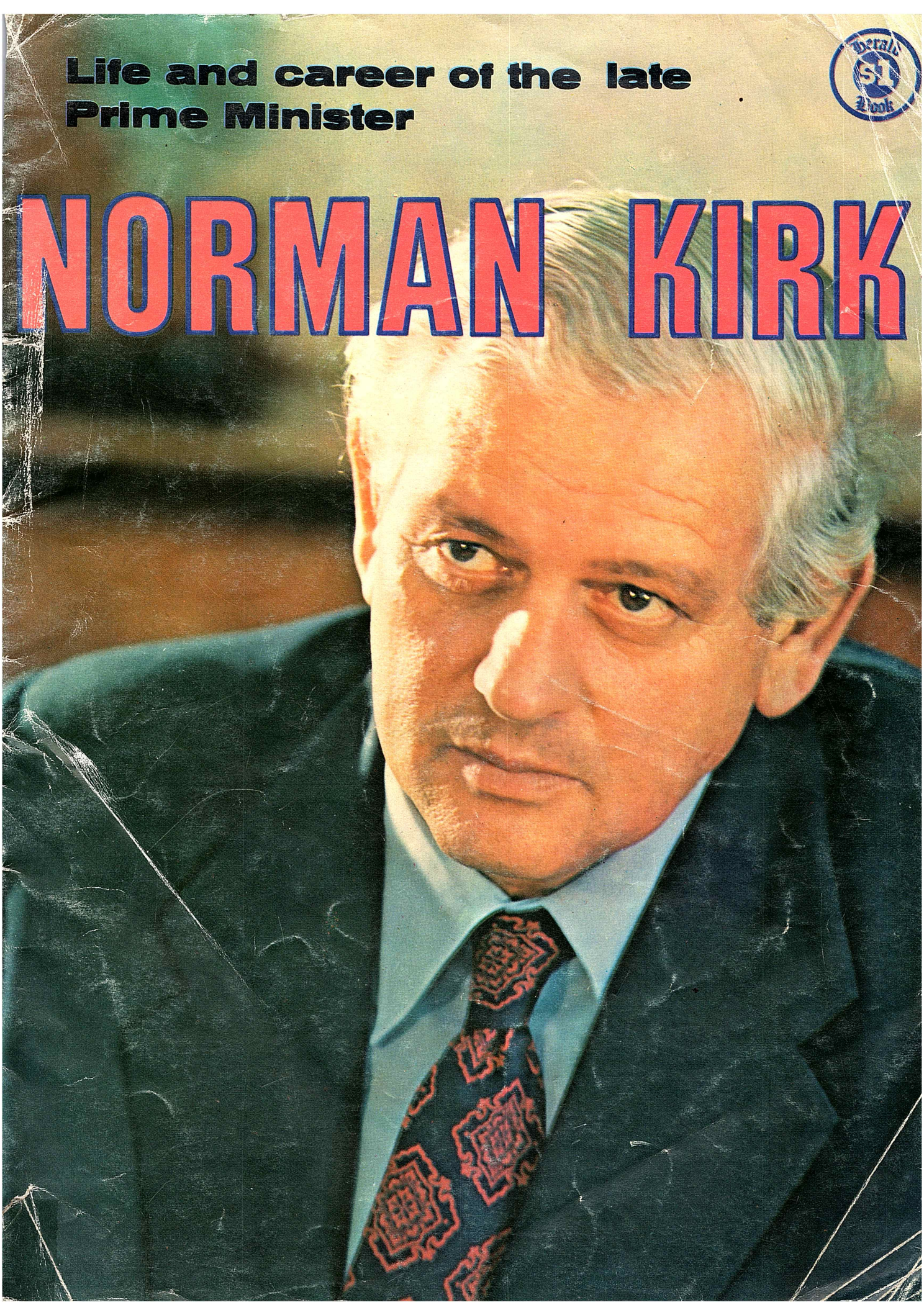
Life and career of the late Prime Minister

NORMAN KIRK



Herald $1 Book

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THE HON. NORMAN ERIC KIRK, Prime Minister of New Zealand, died about 9 p.m. on August 31, 1974, at the Home of Compassion Hospital, Island Bay, Wellington. Mr Kirk died of heart seizure. He had entered the hospital to rest

'For a decent and humane society'

and recuperate from a series of illnesses that plagued the last year of his life.

The country he led for only 21 months was plunged into deep mourning. In his quest for what he often referred to as "a decent and humane society" he gained the support and often devotion of a huge section of the working population, of Maoris and other Polynesians, of Church groups and workers for social change. His political opponents respected and admired him for his calm statesmanship, personal integrity, and enormous capacity for hard and effective work.

After lying in State at Parliament Buildings, Wellington, Mr Kirk was buried in the cemetery of his home town, Waimate, in South Canterbury, on September 5, 1974.

This booklet is a tribute to Mr Kirk, and a pictorial record of how an ordinary working man could devote his brain, energy and life to make his country a better place in which to live.

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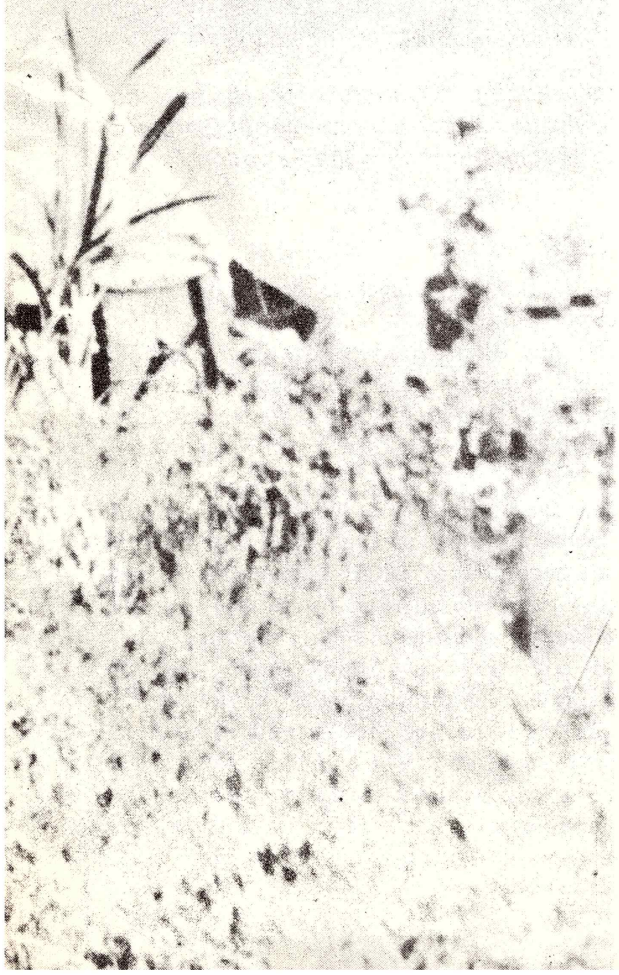
Family life

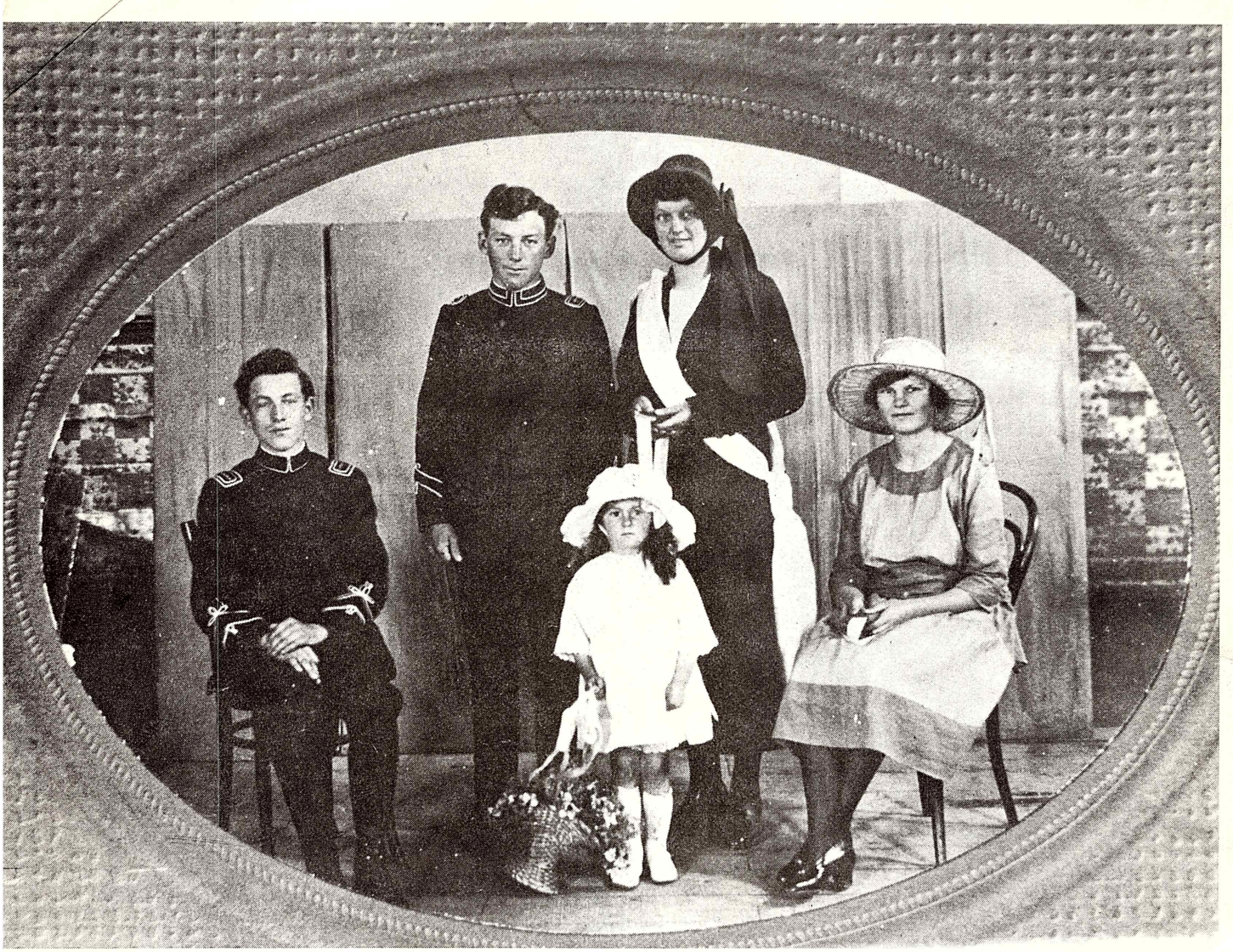
"Sally" social conscience and depression poverty shaped his political views



BORN on January 6, 1923, at Waimate, South Canterbury, the son of a cabinet maker, Mr Kirk was reared during hard times. From his birth until 1928 the family lived at Waimate, then moved to Christchurch. Unlike his Labour predecessors, Prime Minister Kirk was a New Zealander. On his mother's side ancestors came from Cornwall in the 1840s and his father's grandparents, from Scotland, settled north of Gore in 1869.

His parents were members of the Salvation Army; his paternal grandfather the Salvation Army

Norman Eric Kirk, aged five, at his grandfather's home in Christchurch.



Norman Kirk's parents' wedding in Christchurch. His paternal grandfather was the Salvation Army bandmaster in Gore and for a time Norman was second baritone in the Salvation Army's Christchurch choir.

bandmaster in Gore and for a time Mr Kirk was a second baritone in their Christchurch choir.

His childhood years, in a Salvation Army household, were to influence his future thinking. From his parents he gained his values and views on moral issues which were to remain with him throughout his life as an MP and Prime Minister.

Educated at Linwood Avenue primary school, young Norman Kirk had no secondary schooling.

At the age of 12, in the depression days of the mid-thirties, he painted roofs and tarred gutters; he did gas welding and later joined the railways, becoming message boy and later, cleaner.

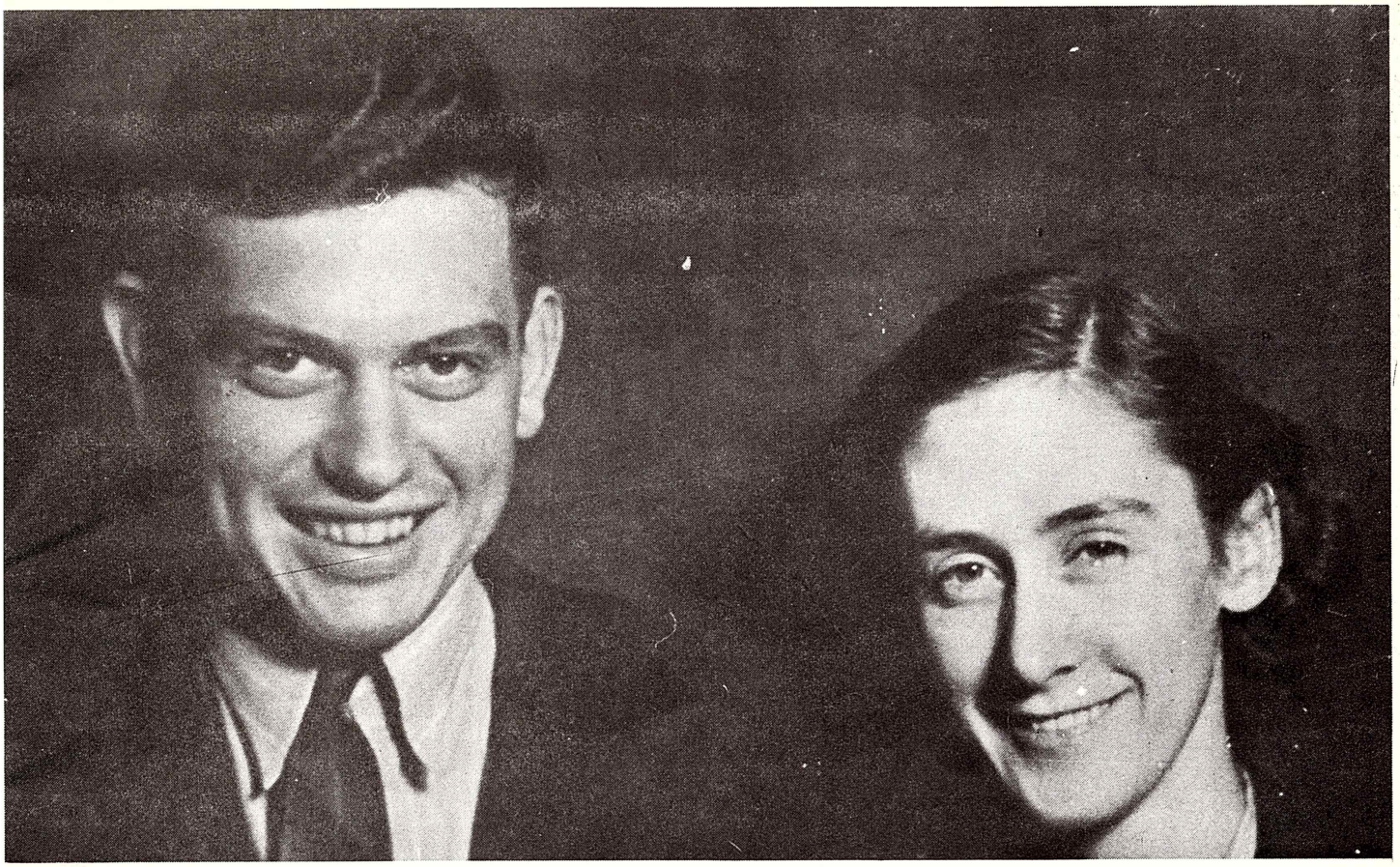
He studied at technical school but did not complete a fitting and turning apprenticeship.

Lack of formal schooling, however, did not deter the man who went on to become a member of the Labour Party at 20, a mayor at the age of 30, Member of Parliament at 34, President of his party at 40 and the youngest leader of the Labour Party two years later.

Like many of his predecessors in the Labour movement, Norman Kirk was essentially a self-made man. "Practical" was an appropriate description and often used word in his conversation.

At the age of 16, he was working at Frankton Junction, as an engine cleaner. The Second World War had begun but Mr Kirk — then on a sickness benefit — was classed unfit for service when he was called up. During his early working life a thyroid condition gave him trouble and on medical advice he gave up one of his jobs.

By correspondence he gained first-class stationary steam and river engineers' tickets. He held a variety of jobs in dairy factories, the Martha Mine, at a rubber factory and for a spell on the Auckland ferries — which years later were



Engaged. At the age of 20 he met Ruth Miller at Paeroa and they married in 1943 — with the modest capital of £7 10s.

to become an issue for his consideration while Prime Minister.

It was while working on the ferries in 1943 that he married and in the same year, developed an active interest in politics with his membership of the Labour Party and minor involvement in the trade union movement.

Mr Kirk was earning £4 14s 6d a week and a stabilisation bonus of 14s 7d when, at the age of 20, he met his wife, then Ruth Miller, at Paeroa. When they married he had £7 10s capital.

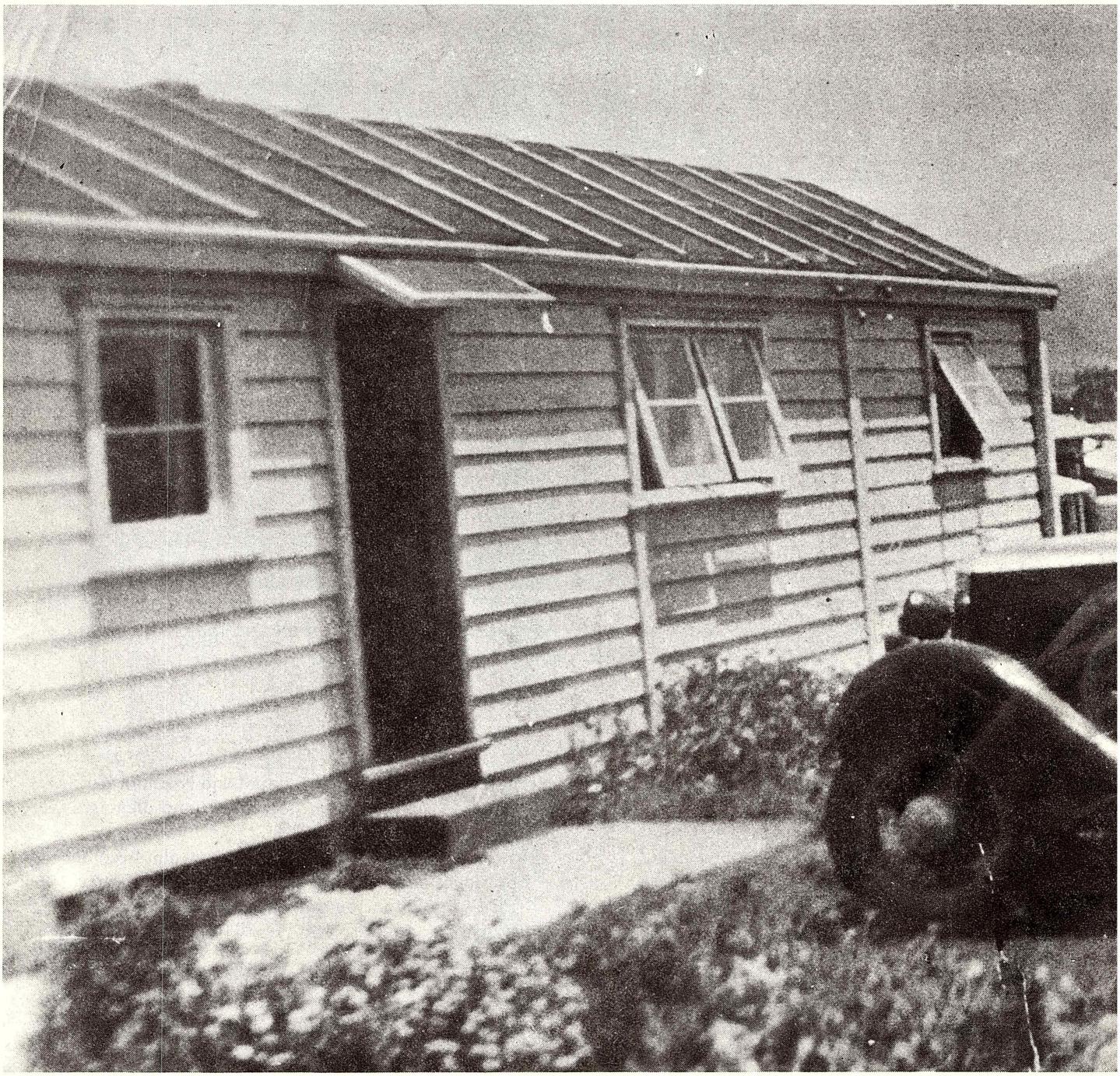
Devonport Anglican Church was the scene of their wedding and they started married life living in rented accommodation at Ascot Avenue, Narrow Neck. A little later in their marriage Mr and Mrs Kirk lived in a public works hut while Mr Kirk cut scrub and did other jobs on his days off to accumulate some capital.

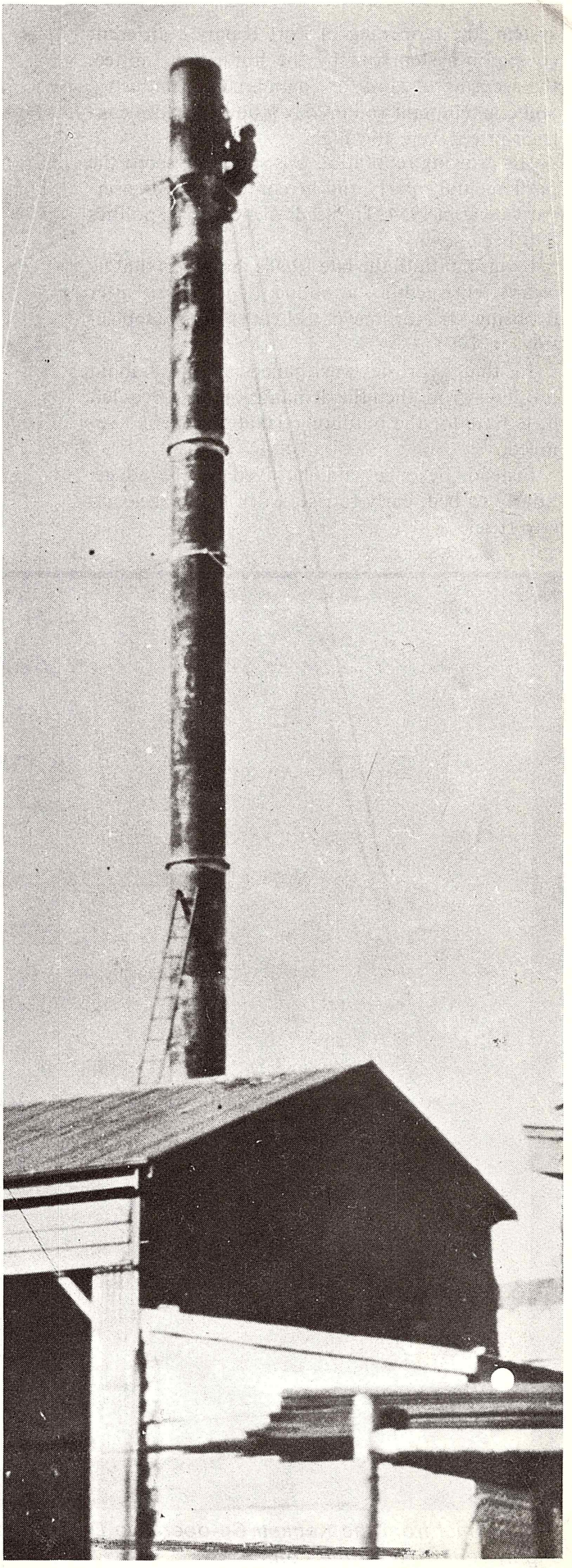
With $130, that precious capital, the Kirks were able to buy a section at Kaiapoi and Norman Kirk set about building their home and hand-digging a 70-foot well.

That move to Kaiapoi in 1948 saw him become president of the local branch of the Labour Party. Five years later, the branch which he had helped transform, took six of the 10 borough council seats.

Winning 610 of the 770-odd votes cast in the mayoral election, Mr Kirk — with no experience in municipal government — became mayor at the age of 30. He was the youngest mayor in the country and four years later he retained the office unopposed. Kaiapoi had not previously had a Labour council.

As Mayor of Kaiapoi he campaigned for a sewerage scheme, the first sealing of borough streets, better fire services, pensioner housing, an unimproved instead of capital values rating





ABOVE: The Ministry of Works hut, Katikati, where the Kirks lived after their marriage. While they were here they saved enough to buy a section in Kaiapoi. RIGHT: Mr Kirk painting the chimney of the Katikati dairy factory.

system, the reopening of Port Kaiapoi, an adult education system run by the library committee, the securing of land for commerce and industry, and council plant run on day labour because contract prices were too high.

His growing reputation was soon to interest the parliamentary party and he contested the conservative seat in 1954. The seeds of a career in politics had been sown.

It was not until the late 1960's, however, that he clearly emerged as a public figure, even after deposing Mr Nordmeyer as Leader of the Opposition, in 1965.

In that year he was hailed as the Labour prodigy. From then the demands on his career left little time for the outdoor relaxations he had enjoyed.

Instead, he once said, he lived by the adage: "Early to bed, early to rise, work like blazes and advertise!"

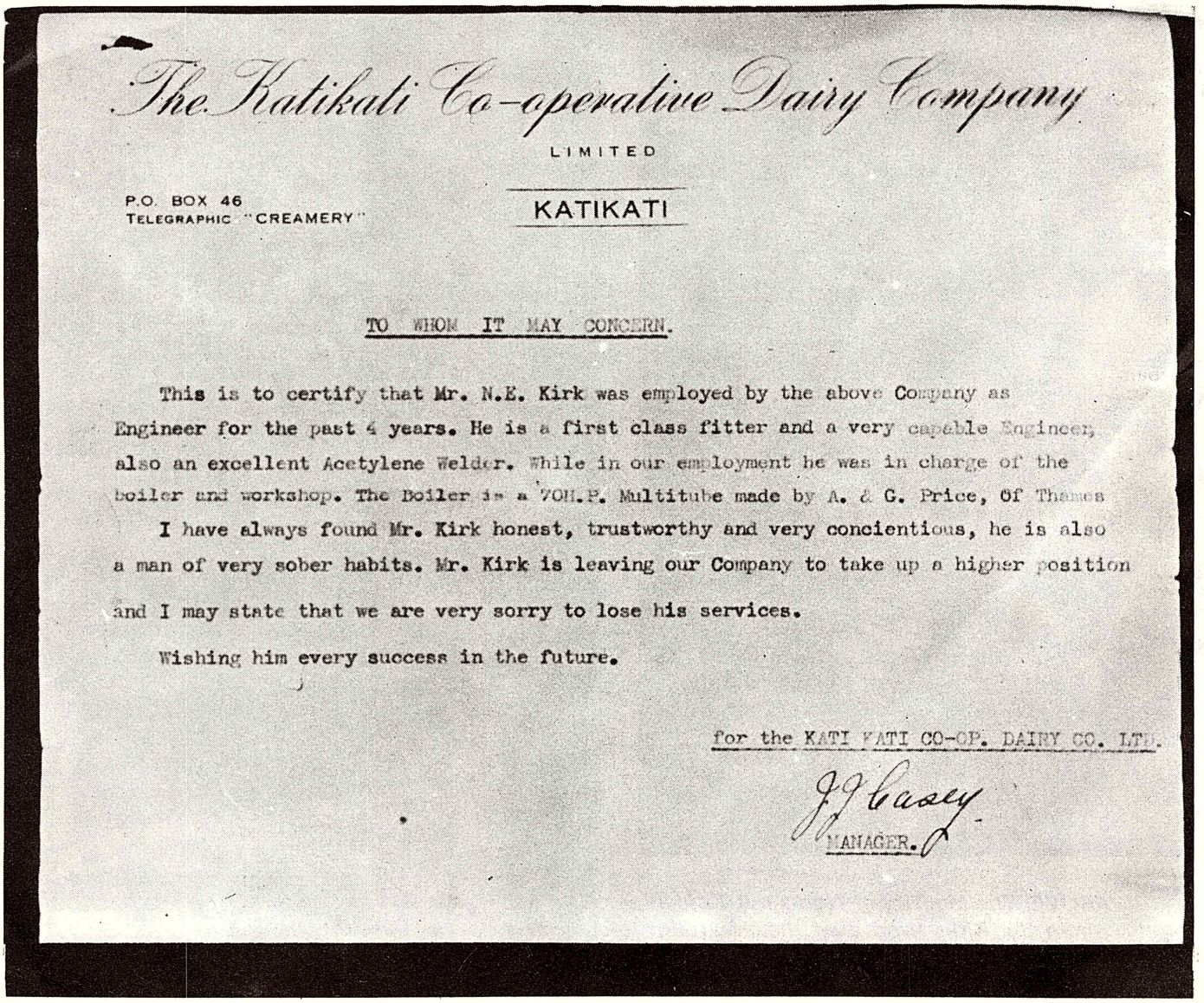
Before he became Prime Minister, in 1972, Mrs Kirk noted that her husband liked to relax with the family when he could. Yet even on a picnic, she recalled in an interview, he was as likely as not to be distractedly scrawling speech notes, or memoranda, or checking reference books.

Mr and Mrs Kirk had five children: Robert, now aged 30; Margaret, 28; John, 27; Philip, 21 and 12-year-old Robyn.

Throughout her husband's public life, Mrs Kirk supported him by working quietly in the background, doing such tasks as sorting mail, answering the telephone and making visits on his behalf.

In the late 1960's, when Mr Kirk was Leader of the Opposition, Mrs Kirk referred to her role as Mayoress of Kaiapoi.

"I feel very sorry for mayors and mayoresses," she said, aware of the constant demand to listen to



The Katikati Co-operative Dairy Company
LIMITED

P.O. BOX 46
TELEGRAPHIC "CREAMERY"

KATIKATI

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This is to certify that Mr. N.E. Kirk was employed by the above Company as Engineer for the past 4 years. He is a first class fitter and a very capable Engineer, also an excellent Acetylene Welder. While in our employment he was in charge of the boiler and workshop. The Boiler is a 70H.P. Multitube made by A. & G. Price, Of Thames

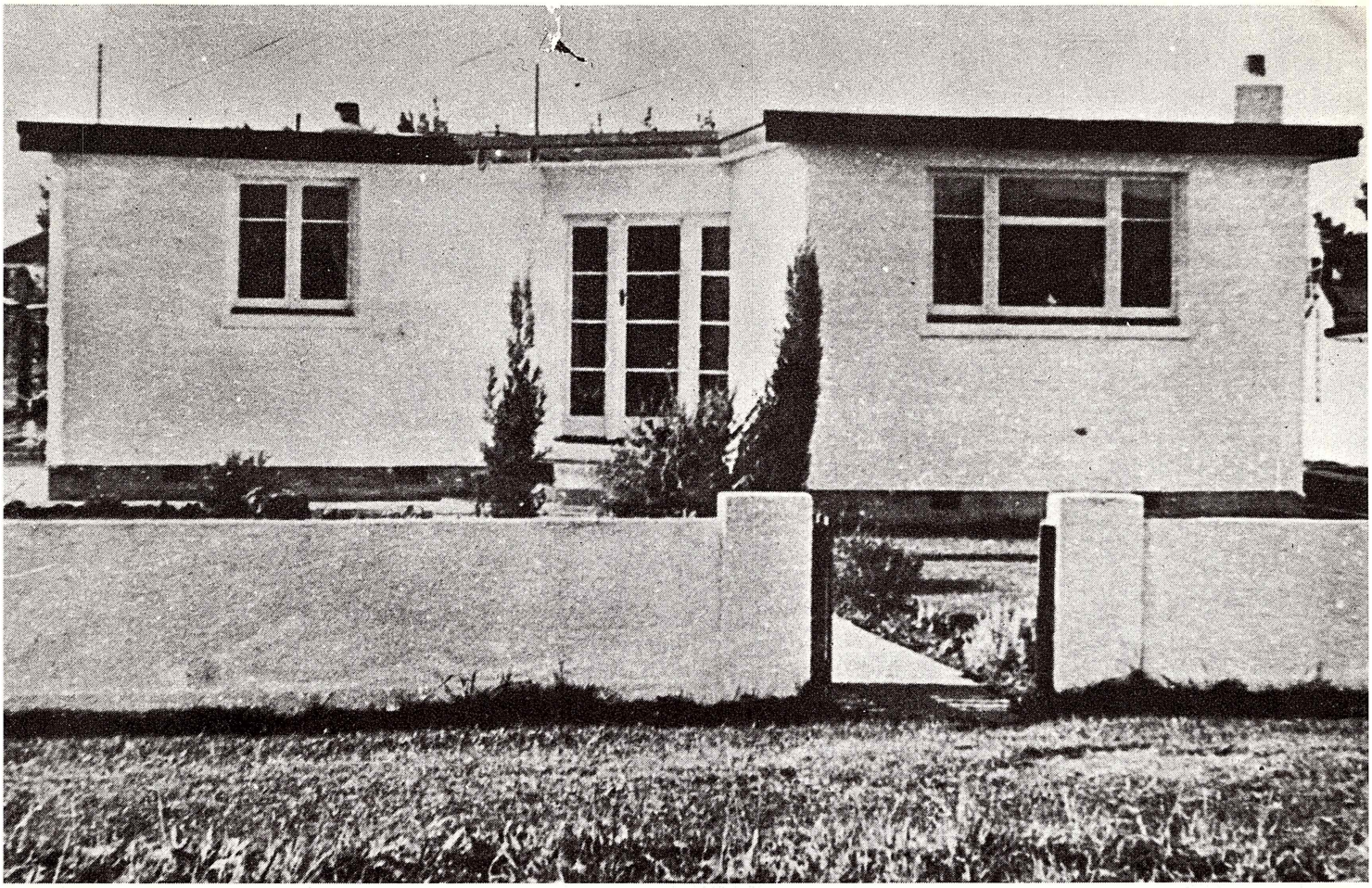
I have always found Mr. Kirk honest, trustworthy and very concientious, he is also a man of very sober habits. Mr. Kirk is leaving our Company to take up a higher position and I may state that we are very sorry to lose his services.

Wishing him every success in the future.

for the KATI KATI CO-OP. DAIRY CO. LTD.

J.J. Casey
MANAGER.

Testimonial from the Katikati Co-operative Dairy Company. Mr Kirk worked there as an engineer and was highly regarded by the company.



The house Norman Kirk built in Kaiapoi. In fact, he built not only the house, but the blocks as well. Every day when he finished work he would come home and make a bag of cement into blocks, until he had enough for the entire house.

other people's problems and do whatever could be done.

But demands grew heavier on Ruth Kirk as her husband's career progressed and after the 1972 election, Mrs Kirk found herself in the limelight. She adapted quietly, without fuss, to her new role. "If I make mistakes I can only laugh at myself and go on again," she commented.

In recent years he devoted himself full-time to politics and there was no time for the outdoor pursuits that Mr Kirk had once keenly followed—fishing, shooting and deerstalking; the sports that any New Zealander might enjoy.

Although a non-smoker, he once remarked in 1965 at a wine and cheese party that he was a "beer-loving Kiwi".

In 1969, with nearly $500 on his head, as Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kirk set out to cover 10 miles on a sponsored walk to raise money for charity.

He completed the course from New Plymouth to Waitara, keeping up a steady pace, in two hours and 45 minutes. Displaying his characteristic determination to succeed, he told reporters beforehand: "I'll do that 10 miles, if I have to finish on my bare feet."

But he also commented that only a few years previously he had frequently walked more than 10 miles a day, around the hills hunting pig and deer.

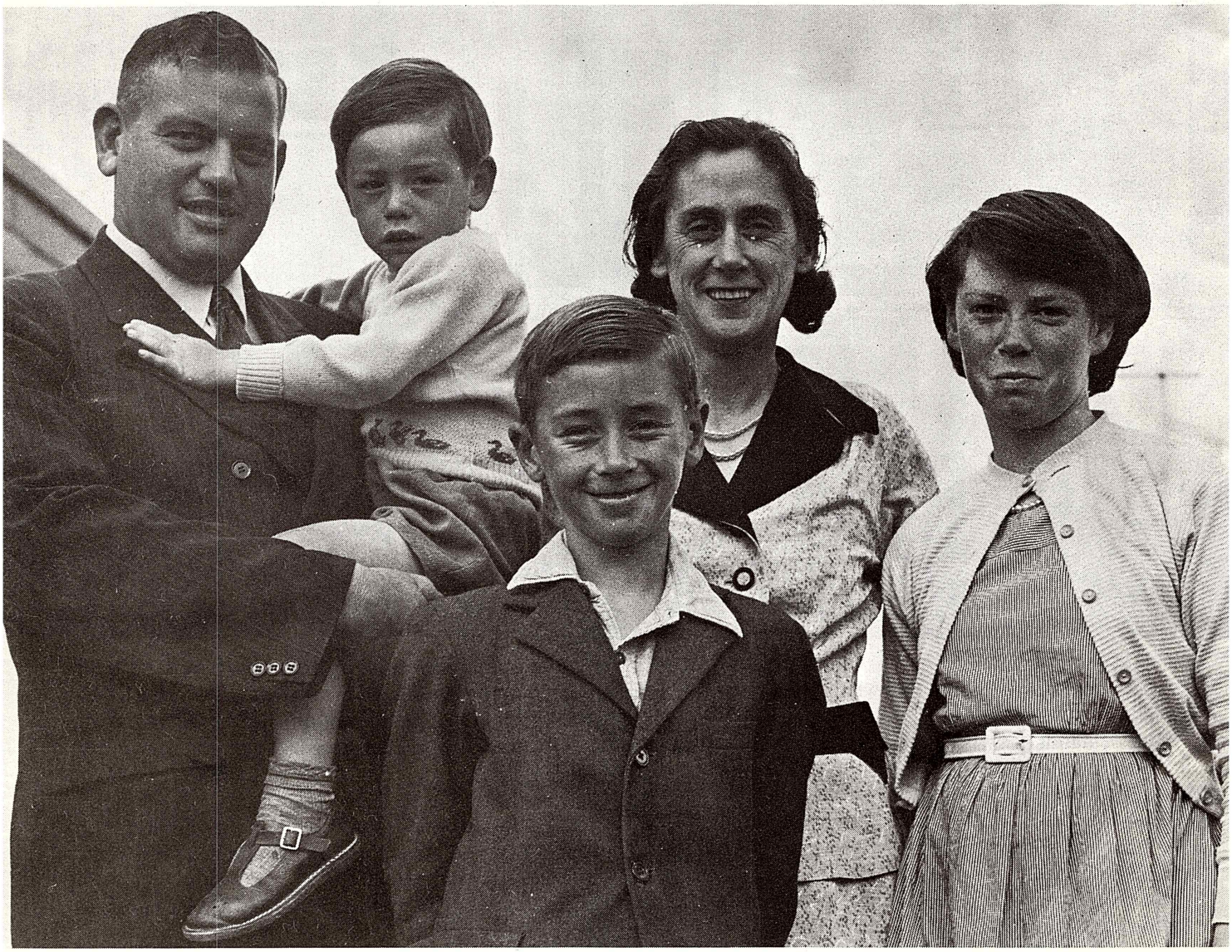
Reading was one of his hobbies and he built up a considerable private library. "For a while I read a book a day," he recalled in 1972. "I must have read every book in the Kaiapoi library."

With the increasing workload of a high office, any leisure time he had enjoyed was largely eroded. He greeted hard work with enthusiasm. Eager and ready to take up the challenge, Mr Kirk was soon at work after the election in 1972.

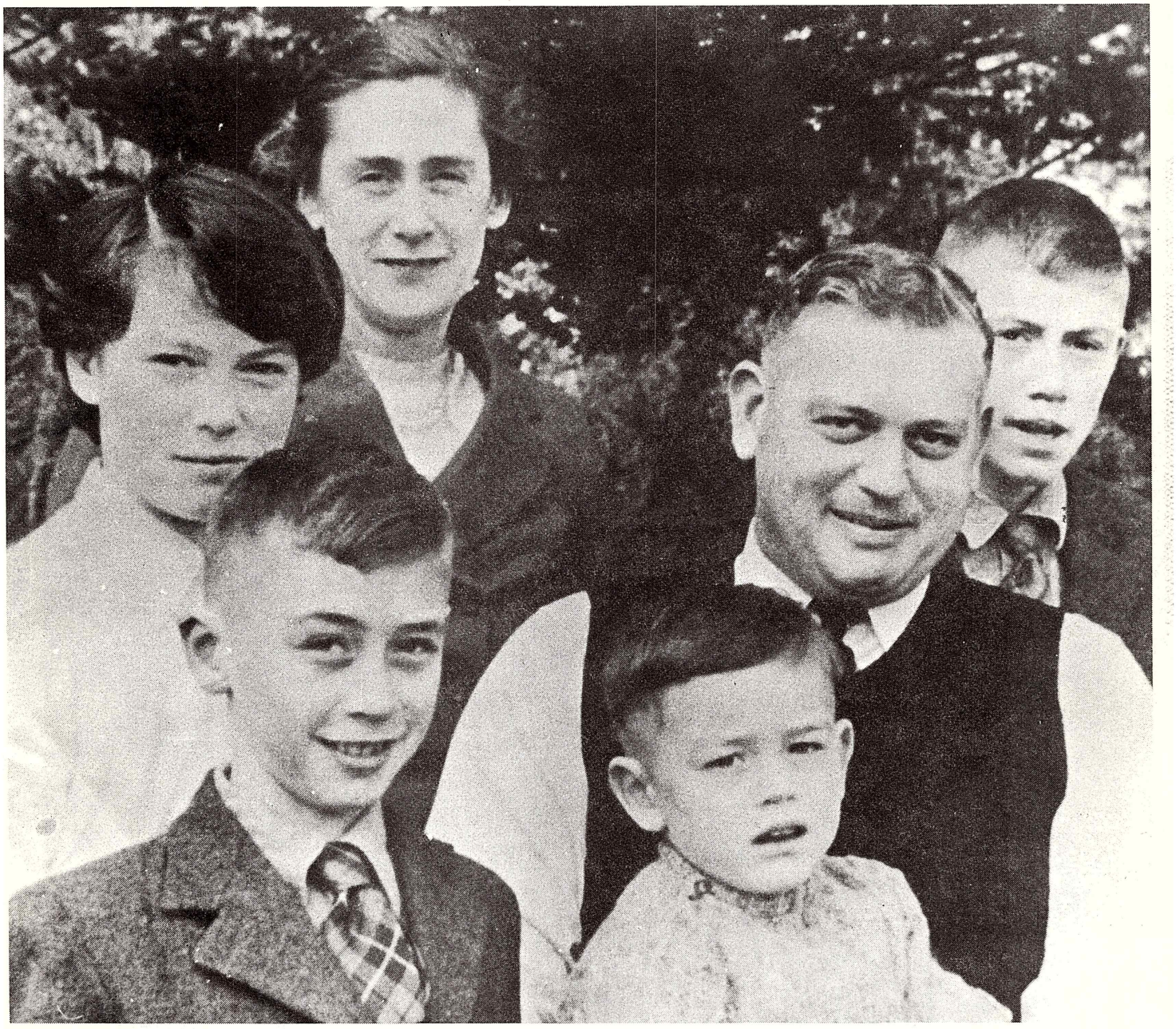
His views on social issues and sense of justice, won him particular popularity with Maoris and other Polynesian races.

Last March, in a ceremony at the Auckland Town Hall he was given a new name "Aumai Lelei le Igoa Ipu" — at the first royal kava ceremony to be performed in New Zealand.

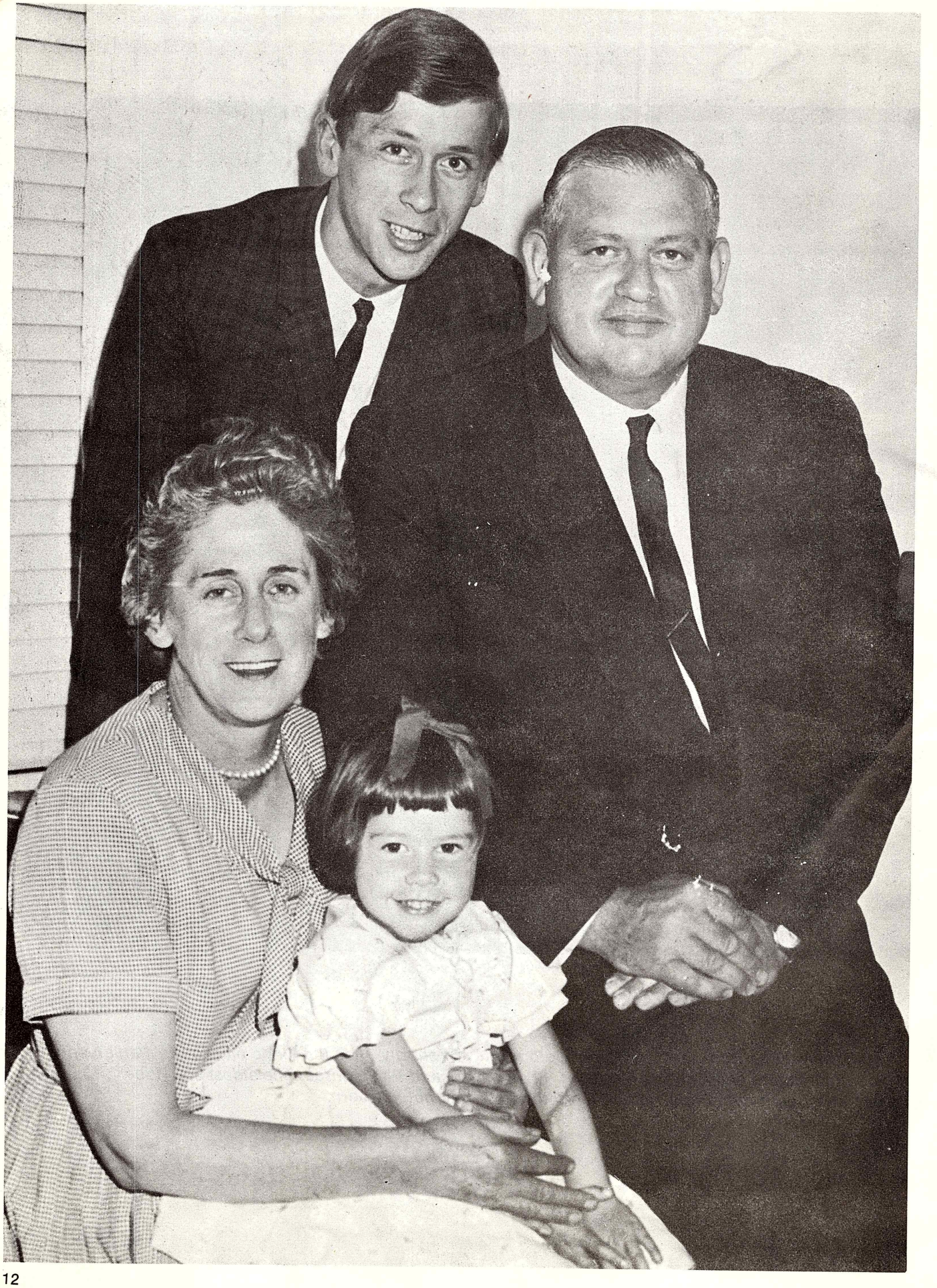
He was there to meet the Samoan branch of the Labour Party and was accorded the same privilege as would be given to a Samoan king — for in Samoan eyes he was the king of New Zealand. His new title meant that he was accepted by both royal families of Samoa.

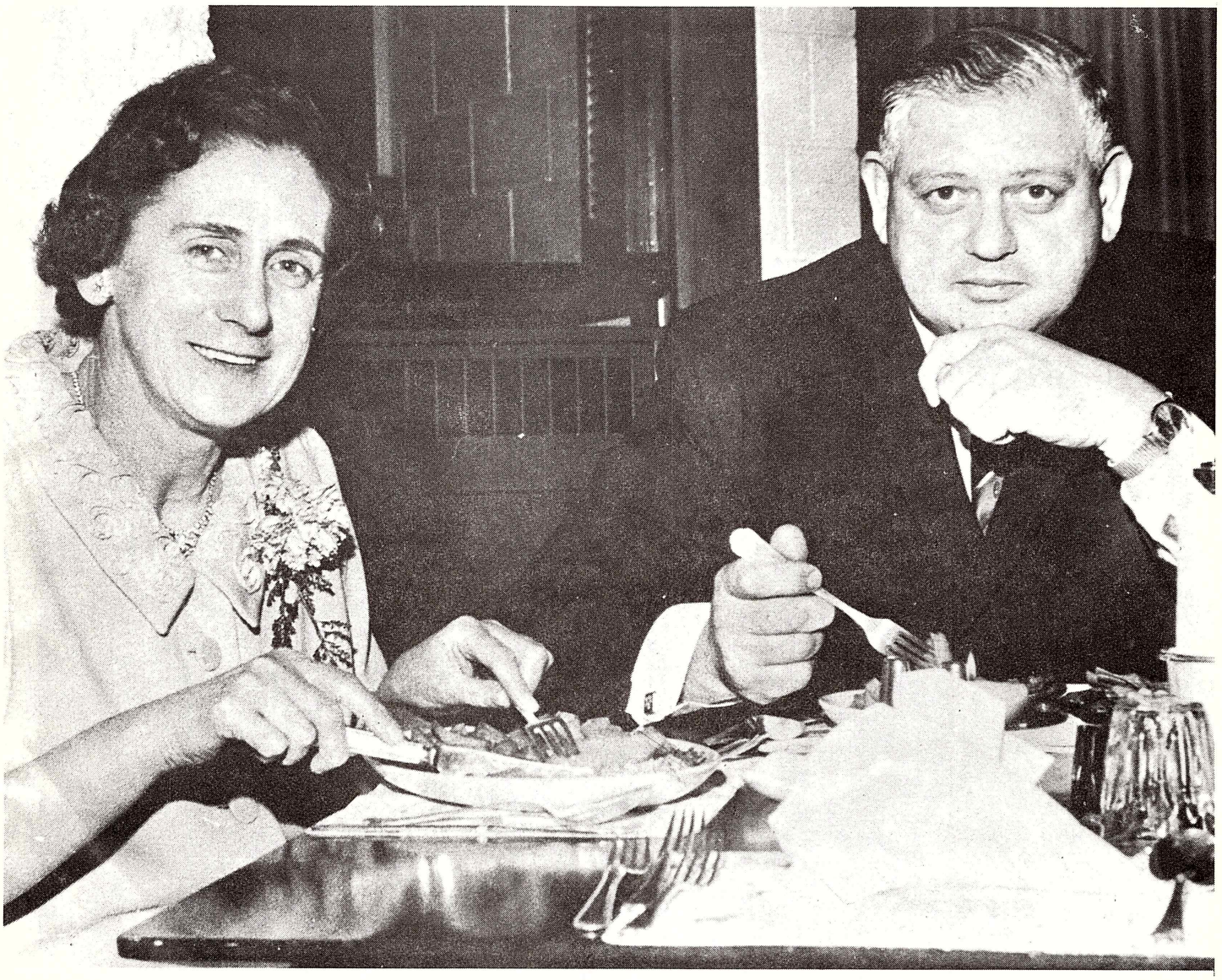


Family of a new M.P.



Two photographs from the Kirks' family album, taken shortly after Mr Kirk's election to Parliament in 1957. The picture at left shows Margaret, 11, John, 10, and Philip, three. The eldest son Robert, 13, was away at a Scout camp and Robyn, the fifth child, was not yet born.





LEFT: Mr and Mrs Kirk, with John and Robyn, 1965. By now their children were growing up. Their eldest son Robert had gone to Antartica and their eldest daughter Margaret, was nursing in Rotorua. ABOVE: Silver wedding celebration, 1968.

Mr Kirk's humanitarian policies made him a great favourite with Polynesians. Here, he holds little Tuainekore Enoka, 2½, on his knee at a reception given to him by the people of the Cook Islands.

Kirk in politics

His creed: "Early to bed, early to rise; work like blazes and advertise."

NORMAN KIRK did two important things in 1943 — he married his wife Ruth — and joined the Labour Party. His political values were shaped by his early childhood in a Salvation Army household in Waimate, creating compassion and a near-reverence for family life. Several years of constant moving around in his job as an engine driver took him and his family to Hawkes Bay, where Mr Kirk became president of the local branch of the Labour Party.

In 1948 he moved to Kaiapoi, where he quickly set about reorganising the local branch of the party, and in 1953, he was elected Mayor of Kaiapoi in a landslide victory.

He was only 30, and the youngest mayor in New Zealand. His appetite for hard work soon became evident, and he set about renovating Kaiapoi — a town in disrepair and without many amenities.

He became a member of several local organisations, including the district roads council, the museum trust board, and the Corso and nursing committees.

The young man's boundless energy and initiative was soon noticed by Labour leaders, and in 1954 he accepted nomination for Hurunui. Mr Kirk had little chance of winning a strongly National seat, but he set to work with a will, and was disappointed to lose the election by 2395 votes.

Still keen to get into Parliament, he contested the Lyttelton seat in 1957 — and won.

He took the seat from Mr H. R. Lake (National) by only 567 votes, and in the 1960 election his margin dropped to 260, a reflection of the swing against Labour following the Black Budget.

His Parliamentary debut was inauspicious. Hansard recorded his first comment as an interjection: "What about sugar last year?" during the ten-day January session of 1958.

In Mr Kirk's maiden speech in the Address-in-Reply debate later that year, he spoke of Commonwealth affairs — and his constituency. The tone, rather than the content, commanded attention.

But he quickly adjusted to Parliament, and became a brash, shrewd and often blunt backbencher. Years of constant reading stood him in good stead in debates, and he became a master of the ways of the House.

He was so highly regarded by his colleagues that, if Labour had been returned to power in 1960, Norman Kirk might well have gained a Cabinet seat. But Labour lost.

In 1963 Mr Kirk's rise in popularity was highlighted by his defeat, at the Labour Party conference, of the vice-president, Mr J.A. Bateman.

Later that year, Mr Kirk increased his Lyttelton majority to 2677 in the General Election, and at the Labour Party conference in 1964 he was elected president of the Labour Party by a wide margin.

After his election, the new president said he would try to improve relations between the industrial and political sections of the Labour movement.

His opponent for the presidency, Mr Bateman, whom Mr Kirk had defeated in a vote for the vice-presidency the previous year, said at the time that "no man can hold Mr Kirk's electorate unless he is a tireless worker."

Mr Kirk, recognised by many as a leader of

"Carry Christmas spirit of fellowship throughout the year," he told country.

great potential, was unopposed for the presidency in 1965.

He was outspoken on issues about which he felt strongly. In Nelson in June, 1965, he urged that New Zealand should control its overseas aid "so it cannot be siphoned off into private pockets and so widen the gap between the rich and the masses."

People, he said, threw up their hands in horror at the sort of strings attached to foreign aid.

"But we are sending a combat unit to Vietnam to tell them what sort of Government they cannot have. Surely there is equal opportunity, through foreign aid, to tell them what sort of living conditions they should have?"

Indiscriminate aid, he said, was worthless unless it was used to lift the standard of existence in underdeveloped countries.

In December, 1965, Mr Kirk challenged Arnold Nordmeyer for the Labour Party leadership, and won. It was a victory which surprised many people, because his ability was better known inside Parliament than outside. He was leader of the party after only seven years as a member of Parliament, and without having held any administrative portfolio in a Government.

After the leadership poll Mr Kirk denied suggestions that there was a split in the party over the leadership. A ballot had been held in accordance with longstanding rules, and, immediately the results of the ballot were declared, a resolution was moved pledging full support to himself as the new leader, he said. The resolution had been carried unanimously.

"Having exercised its democratic rights, the caucus immediately closed ranks behind its democratic choice. In these circumstances, only the very foolish would imagine any division remains within the party."

Less than 12 months after his election as leader of the Labour Opposition, Norman Kirk faced his first General Election as the alternative Prime Minister. The main issue of the 1966 election campaign, he said, was increasing prices, closely followed by heavy overseas borrowing, and welfare.

Labour, however, lost the election — and its new leader had his Lyttelton majority reduced by 700. He attributed this to "a big increase in the number of upper-income homes."

His philosophy of "Christian humanitarianism" was reflected in his Christmas message in 1966, in which he said:

"There are some who have an awareness of Christian faith today, who give little thought to it the rest of the year. We must carry this Christmas spirit of fellowship and good will through the other 364 days of the year."

Mr Kirk guarded against the trap of being strongly critical of Government policy without offering a positive alternative. One such example was his attitude to the continued and increasing New Zealand involvement in the Vietnam conflict in 1967.

Urging that New Zealand should give civil aid to Vietnam rather than send in infantry, he suggested the establishment of an orphanage in South Vietnam.

Mr Kirk repeatedly urged New Zealanders to adopt an attitude of independence, and commented when visiting the Auckland Secondary Teachers College in 1968:

"We have emerged from colonialism in almost reluctant fashion, but we have not yet resolved to make ourselves an independent nation."

And, addressing a meeting of the Auckland regional advisory council of the Labour Party, he pressed for imaginative thinking on the part of the Government.

He criticised Government handling of the wool crisis, and urged, "Why don't we let the wool go to our local manufacturers, let them pay for it, and have it made into goods which can be exported overseas?

"Why can't we seize the opportunity to buy ships of our own, do things in our own time and in our own way? We might have left it 100 years too late, but we should do something about it anyway."

In 1968 Mr Kirk was nominated to contest the Sydenham seat, Christchurch, at the next election. The decision was made in an effort to lighten Mr Kirk's workload, the Lyttelton seat involving a great deal of travelling.

The 1969 election resulted in a narrow win for National, but the Labour leader won the Sydenham seat handsomely, with a majority of 6026.

After this latest defeat at the polls, Mr Kirk began an all-out offensive to win power in 1972. In a hard-hitting 90-minute address at the Labour Party conference in May, 1970, he told members of his own party: "In the last 12 months we have seen that there are one or two who would rather see their names in headlines than see the Labour Party in office.

"I make no demands for subservient obedience,

BEDTIME STORY

A bedtime story from Mum. Mrs Ruth Kirk reads a bedtime story to her daughter Robyn, then aged five, at an Auckland hotel in 1969. The Kirks were on a short holiday from their home in Christchurch.

Robyn greeting her Dad, the Prime Minister, at Wellington airport on his return from an official visit to Asia earlier this year.

Mr Watt told conference: "I am humble to follow him."

but no branch member, no branch, no Labour representation committee, no office-holder, has the right or licence to use his or its position to stab the party in the back via the news media.

"Let those who judge they are too wise, too intellectual or whatever, remember that while they cannot do without the party, the party may one day do without them."

Fighting talk. But it typified the determination of Norman Kirk to end National's hold on government in 1972.

Fact-finding tours to Britain, Europe, the United States and South-east Asia added to Mr Kirk's already encyclopedic knowledge of foreign affairs. He advocated greater co-operation with New Zealand's Pacific neighbours, a more positive approach to the British talks with the Common Market countries, and increased trade with the United States.

In 1971 Mr Kirk spent six weeks in Britain and Europe, to examine more closely the implications for New Zealand of Britain's entry into the Common Market. On his return he expressed concern that New Zealand might be sold short in the UK/EEC talks, and urged that the New Zealand case should be directed more strongly toward the British people.

Addressing the Labour Party's annual conference shortly after his return, Mr Kirk said New Zealand should rely more on its own initiative, both in shipping and in future trade efforts. While not minimising the problem of British entry, he said New Zealand should work as a nation and stand on its own feet.

"I believe the current negotiations are vital," he told the conference. "Inadequate arrangements can and will inflict severe and lasting injury not only on the farmers, but also to the wage and salary earners and on every section of the community.

"The position is as serious as it could be and the changes that would be involved have not been exaggerated.

"Let us accept the seriousness of the position. But let us also accept that we are not a nation with our tails between our legs. We are not a hand-wringing, helpless people.

"While it is true that inadequate provisions for our trade would inflict an injury upon this country, it is also true that in times of adversity the people have risen magnificently to do what is needed."

Not once during his 90-minute address did Mr Kirk lose the attention of his audience, as he roamed over a wide range of topics, from the decline of the Government's fortunes, prices, industrial relations, and the consequences of Britain's entry into the Common Market.

Mr Kirk's address at the conference projected him as a leader of dynamism, with a confidence which rapidly pervaded the delegates. He was given a 60-second standing ovation.

It was an early indication of the near veneration accorded Mr Kirk when the Deputy Leader, Mr Watt, following Mr Kirk on the platform, said, "I am humble to follow him."

There was a rousing response from the conference, which accorded its leader another standing ovation.

Such was Mr Kirk's confidence in the outcome of the 1972 election that he described the Government, in a speech in Parliament in May, 1971, as "a discredited and defeated political party."

Early in 1972, after expressing anxiety about British acceptance of a unanimity clause covering review arrangements for New Zealand dairy produce, Mr Kirk flew to London for talks with Government and Labour leaders.

"I do trust Britain," he said when he arrived in London, "but we must make sure that the same words mean the same thing to us both. I am not sure that we are all getting the same thing out of the same sentence."

When he returned, Mr Kirk said New Zealand was living in a fool's paradise if it imagined that arrangements under which Britain was entering the Common Market would provide adequately for New Zealand's future.

In his address to the 1972 Labour Party conference Mr Kirk concentrated on what he described as the Government's mishandling of the economy.

He said the Labour Party's main objectives as the Government would be: —

- To pursue policies to promote, restore and maintain economic and social justice for all sections of the public.
- To follow independent and vigorous policies in international affairs.
- To industrialise at a faster rate, which the party would facilitate by guaranteeing protection.
- Full employment.

It was time for a real change, said Mr Kirk.

"The struggle we are all engaged in is to set the country free from one of the most arrogant, dic-

tatorial and incompetent governments the country has ever had."

Politicking it might have been, but in mid-1972 Mr Kirk backed up his request for increased aid to developing nations when he gave one per cent of his salary to the Corso Bangladesh appeal.

He presented a cheque for $117.60 to Corso and said:

"I cannot forget the hungry people I saw in Bangladesh. Although war stops there is no peace while people are enslaved by poverty and have nothing but a future of despair before them.

"More than ever I am concerned that New Zealand should make perceptible progress towards meeting its international obligation of devoting one per cent of its gross national product to aid for developing countries.

"Because we strongly believe in the principle of one per cent in aid, Mrs Kirk and I have decided to do what we can. We have decided to give Corso's Bangladesh appeal one per cent of my salary."

It was actions such as this which endeared Mr Kirk to churchmen and women throughout New Zealand, and to the large numbers of young people with a humanitarian concern for the underprivileged.

In July, just four months before the election, Mr Kirk announced that a Labour Government would send a frigate to the French nuclear test area in the Pacific.

He said the Government had refused to take strong action against France for fear of an effect on New Zealand's trade. But, he said, there was a proven connection between nuclear activity and cancer.

"It is no use being the richest cancer patient in the hospital," he said.

When a buoyant Mr Kirk opened his party's election campaign in Palmerston North on November 1, 1972, it was the start of an exhaustive and exhausting four weeks for the future Prime Minister.

He was unsparing of himself during the entire campaign. His pilgrimage throughout the country was like a return to the oldstyle, whistle-stop handshaking style of electioneering.

His gift of holding an audience, of knowing the right things to say and the right chords to touch, won Labour many votes.

The more liberal members of the Labour Party might not have liked his references to "the bikies", his constant harping on "the family unit" and his conservative views on issues such as censorship and abortion — but he knew his electorate.

Mr Kirk promised that a Labour Government would pay particular attention to the economy, education, more housing, better public health facilities, effective industrial relations policies, and the lowering of prices.

The confident Labour leader addressed capacity crowds almost everywhere he went and came to power in a landslide victory on November 25, 1972.

At 49, he was the youngest Prime Minister since Gordon Coates, 47 years earlier.

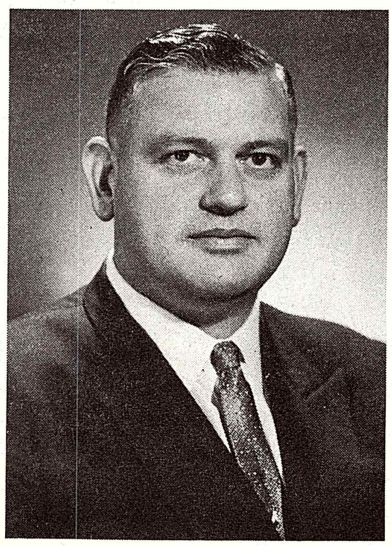
A long session in the House takes its toll. Mr Kirk, as Leader of the Opposition, checks his notes before resuming the lengthy, drawn-out committee stages of the Local Authorities (Petroleum Tax) Bill in Parliament, 1970.

Leader of his country

1972 and Labour wins the General Election. Norman Kirk attends a meeting of the Labour Party caucus as Prime Minister-elect. He's come a long way in the 29 years since he first joined the party.

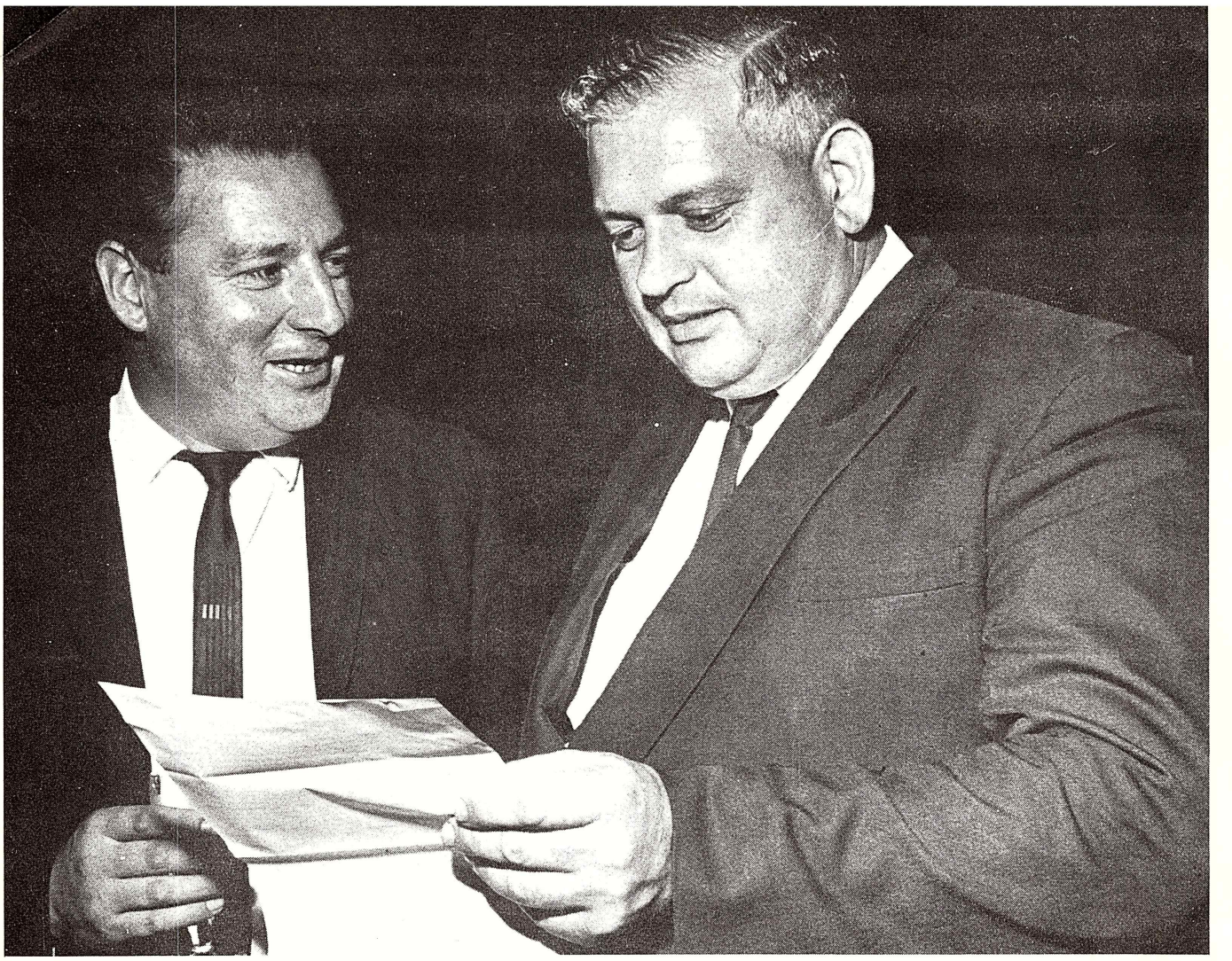
Political career

BELOW: As he was when he first entered Parliament as Member for Lyttelton in 1957. RIGHT: The step which catapulted him into the limelight — election as Leader of the Opposition in December, 1965. With him are the Hon. Hugh Watt, deputy-leader, and the former leader, the Hon. A. H. Nordmeyer.



Two Losses in General Elections...

BELOW: Following the results at the Labour Party headquarters in Lyttelton in 1966. RIGHT: Looking rather dejected, with Mrs Kirk at his side, at party rooms in Christchurch in 1969, when it became clear that the National Party had again retained office.

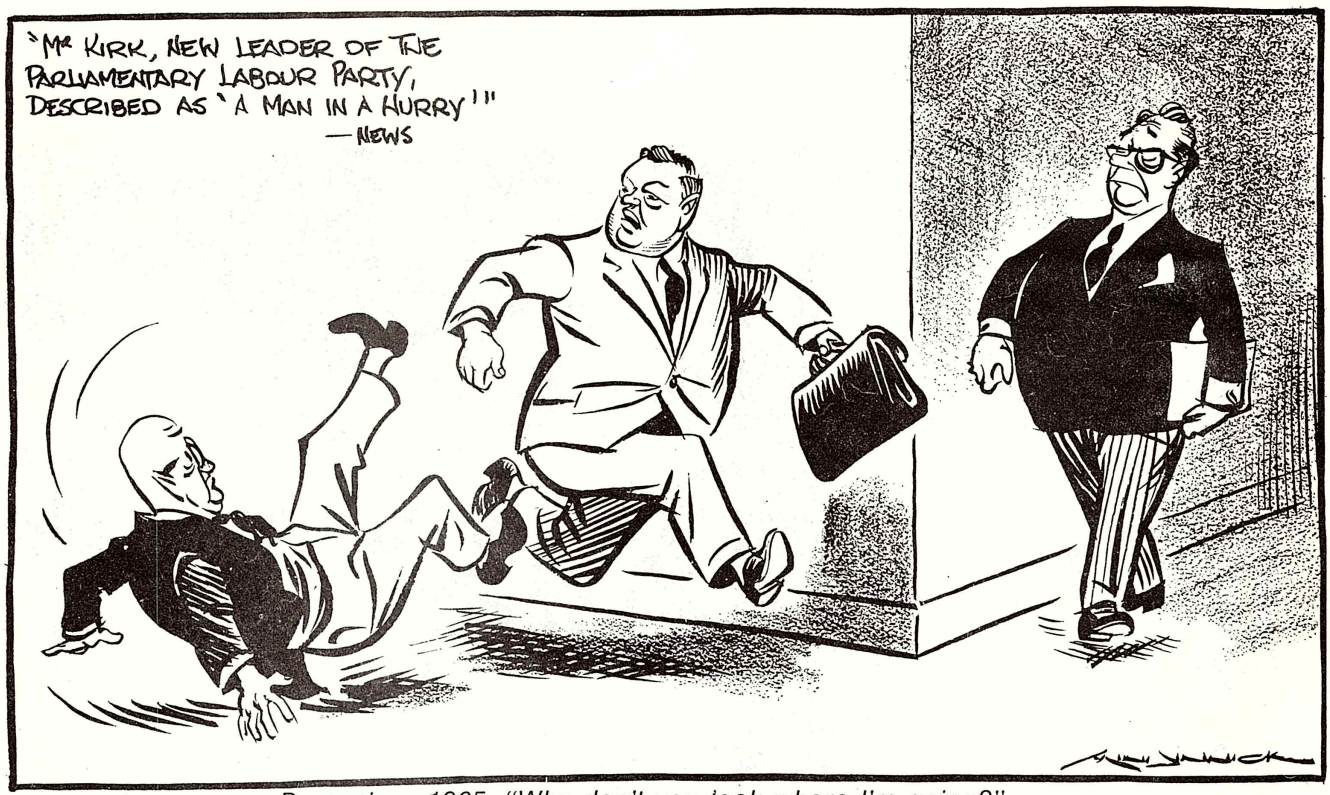


ABOVE: Conferring with Mr F. B. Knipe in Auckland in 1965, shortly after he became the new Leader of the Opposition. BELOW: At the Labour Party conference of 1968. On the left is the party president of that time, Mr N. V. Douglas.

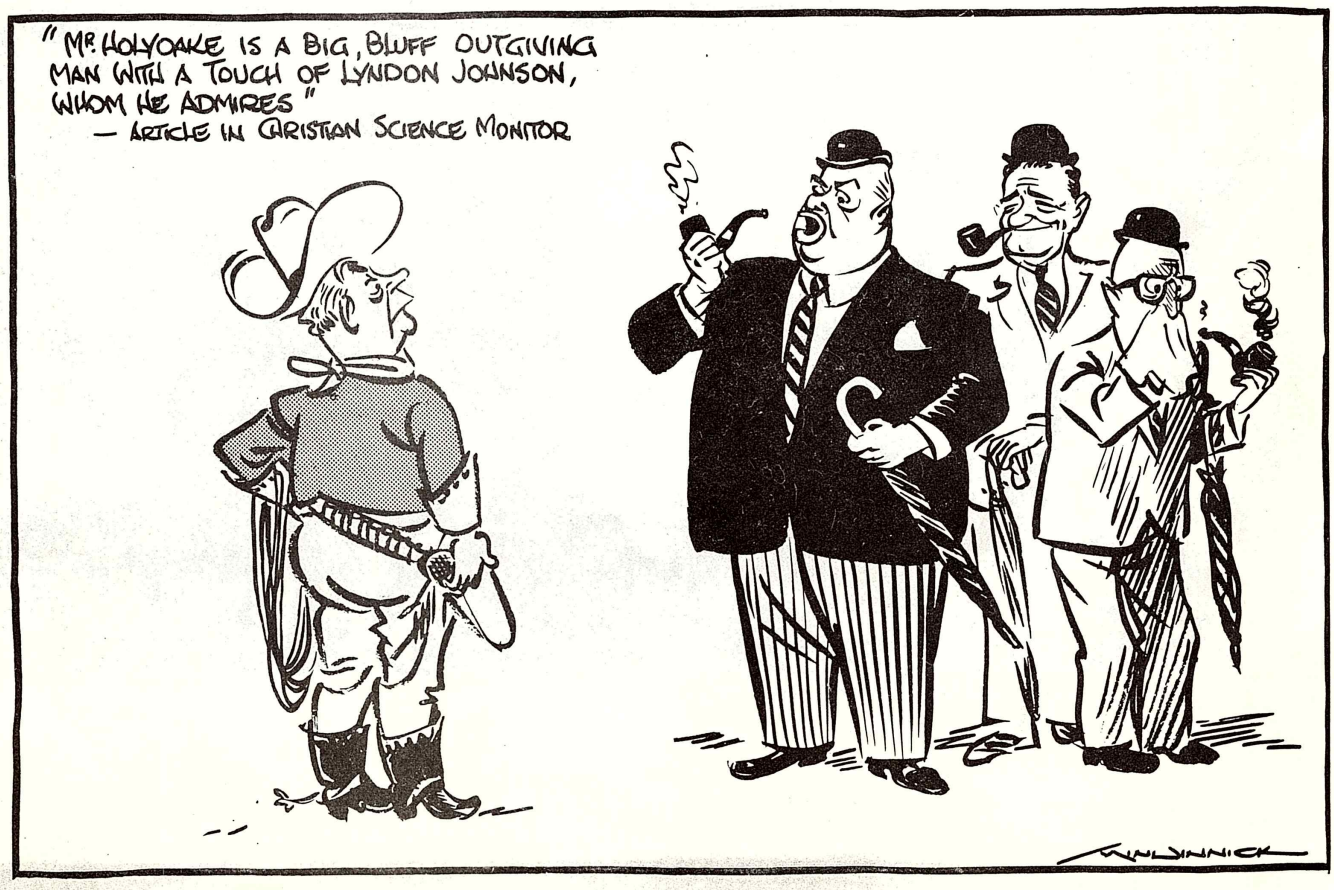
R PARTY

APRIL, 1971: Leaving from Auckland with Mrs Kirk on the first stage of a journey to Britain.

Minhinnick's View: 1965-1



December, 1965: "Why don't you look where I'm going?"


"MR. HOLYOAKE IS A BIG, BLUFF OUTGIVING MAN WITH A TOUCH OF LYNDON JOHNSON, WHOM HE ADMIRES"
— ARTICLE IN CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
MINHINNICK

April, 1966: "Well, I'm a bigger, bluffer, outgivinger man with a touch of Harold Wilson, who admires ME!"

973

December, 1972: "P.A.Y.E. and Monarch, forth they went, forth they went together . . ."

September, 1973: "Home, sweet home."

P.M.-now to work

THE day after Labour's sweeping victory in 1972, Mr Kirk made it clear that he was in a hurry to get things done. The Labour Party had waited in the wings for 15 years to regain power, and the Prime Minister-elect warned that the first sitting of Parliament under his Government would begin much earlier than usual. In an interview on November 26, 1972, Mr Kirk justified his decision to recall Parliament early when he said,

"A lot of people are depending on our policies being implemented. People and factories need work. The savings schemes, the rent appeal boards, the rate subsidies and even the abolition of payroll tax are of direct benefit to the individual. They are all part of our overall approach to stabilisation.

"Having sought the right to govern, I don't think we should go off on a long holiday. Some civil servants will be needed. And for ministers, holidays are secondary."

In the same interview, Mr Kirk denied suggestions that the new Labour Government would be dominated by him. "We're not running a one-man band," he said. "I believe in consultation."

On the bureaucracy, he commented, "A Prime Minister should be able to hear what the bloke living next door to him says, and not just what the head of a Government department says.

"A situation of closed departments is not just a matter of people not knowing what a department is doing."

Major policy points that the Kirk administration was committed to implementing in three years if possible, included:

- Establishment of regional development councils.
- Abolition of the payroll tax and the Remuneration Authority.
- Lowering of the voting age to 18.
- Abolition of compulsory military training.
- Extension of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman to all local bodies.
- A tax rebate for shift workers equal to 10 per cent of their total income tax liability.
- Lower rates of tax on overtime.
- An incentive savings scheme for prospective home owners.
- The buying of existing homes to increase more rapidly the pool of State houses.
- Loans to provide additional living quarters for aged relatives in or adjacent to family homes.
- Establishment of a comprehensive wage-related contributory superannuation scheme.
- Establishment of rent appeal boards.
- Reduction of hospital waiting lists.
- Special provisions for pre-school education.
- Recognition of the Communist government of China.
- Repeal of the News Media Ownership Act.
- Establishment of a Ministry of Sport and Recreation.

His first day in Parliament after his election as Prime Minister-elect was typical of the pace he set himself during his 21 months in office.

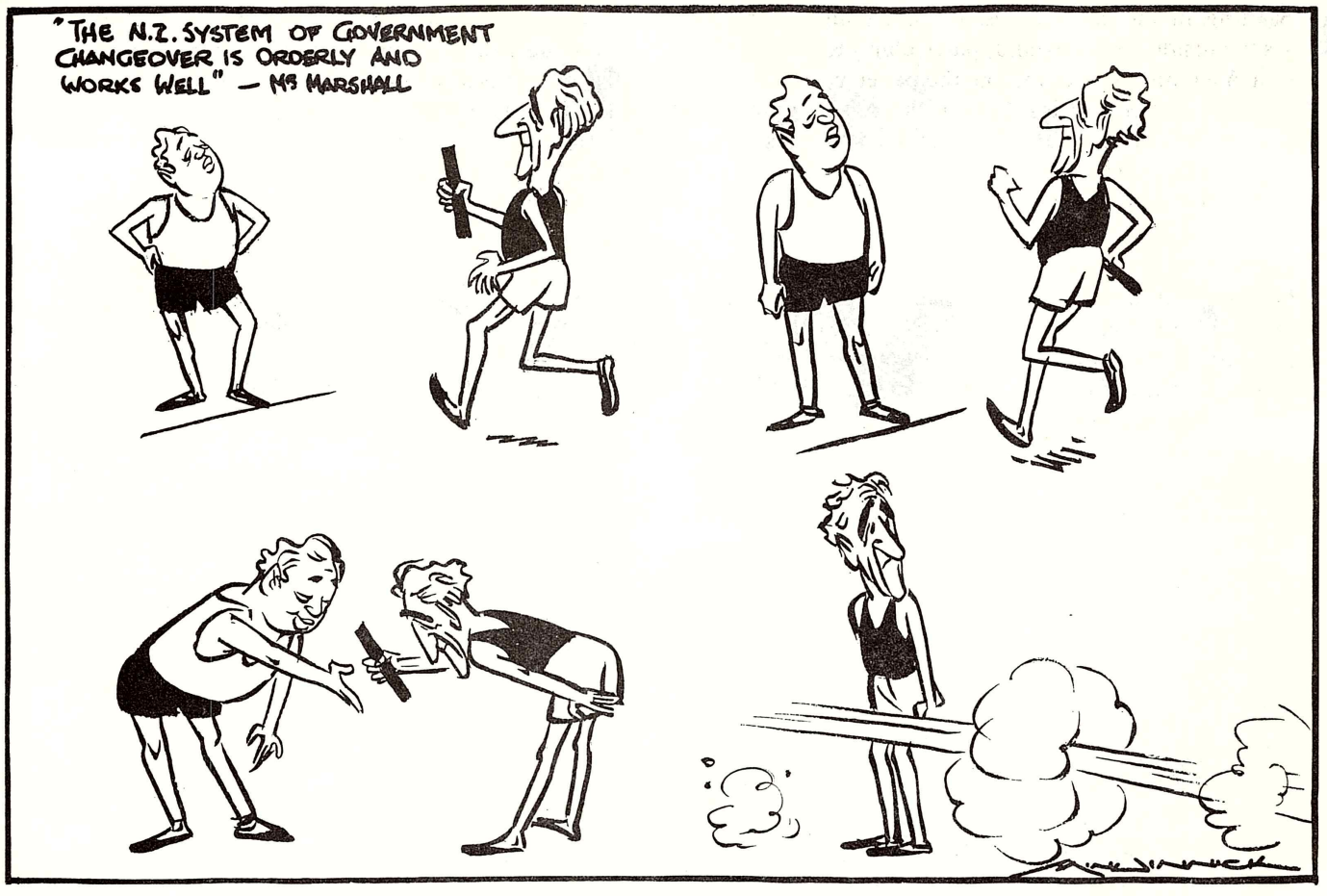
From the moment he boarded the 9 a.m. flight to Wellington from Christchurch, until he closed his office door and headed for home well after midnight, Mr Kirk was constantly on the move.

In between times he spent 45 minutes with the man he deposed, Mr Marshall, and threw a small party for his political staff who, he said, had worked "hellish hard."

He arrived at Wellington to find people warmly shaking his hand. From the airport he drove to Parliament Buildings and a meeting with his deputy, Mr Watt, and his two party whips, Mr H. L. May and Mr R. L. Bailey.

For an hour he was host to an inquisitive press corps from the parliamentary press gallery, during his hurried office lunch he paused to telephone his tailors and ask for some quick changes to his suits. He had lost a lot of weight during the rigours of the election campaign.

In the early afternoon he sent a telegram which gave him special joy. It was to an 80-year-old Otago woman who had supported the Labour



Once elected to office, Norman Kirk made it clear he was in a hurry to get things done. And as Minhinnick's cartoon in the New Zealand Herald indicated, Kirk wasted no time in getting started.

Party for more than 60 years. Mr Kirk told her his election victory was the best birthday present he could give her.

He called briefly on the clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr E. A. Roussel, and then spent some time with the Prime Minister, Mr Marshall. Later in the afternoon the British High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Galsworthy, called on Mr Kirk, and between 4.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. he gave a small party to show his thanks for the toil of his typists and office and research staff.

Then he settled into the office he was soon to vacate, sorting through telegrams, answering telephones, and working on papers until after midnight when he went home to find some sleep.

It soon became obvious that the new Labour Prime Minister could be expected to provide imaginative leadership. In many ways Mr Kirk indicated that tradition for the sake of tradition was not part of Labour Party policy.

When he moved to Wellington from Christchurch, he chose neither the house occupied by the former Prime Minister, Sir Keith Holyoake, nor that of his successor, Mr Marshall. Instead he opted for a house in Seatoun which then housed the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr Highet.

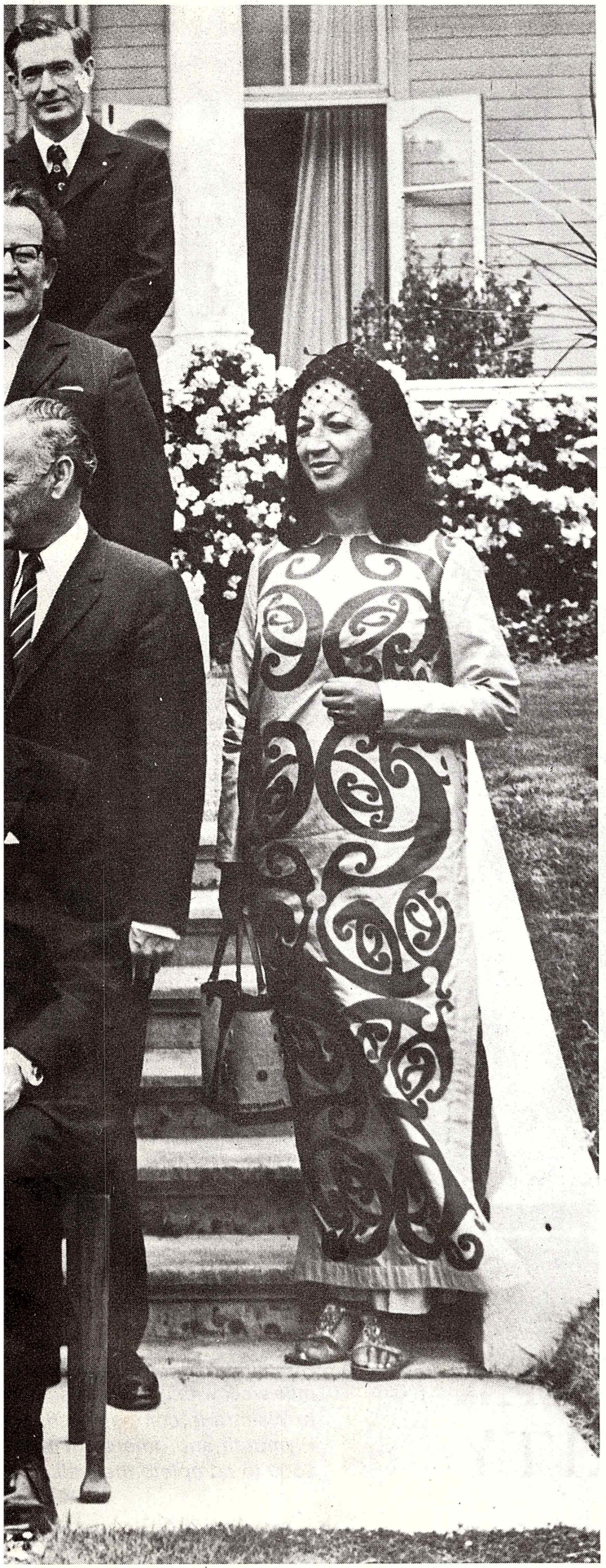
It had the advantage of being near a suburban school, which suited Mr and Mrs Kirk's nine-year-old daughter Robyn.

On more public issues too, he did not hesitate to introduce unusual measures. The Labour policy of sending a frigate to the French nuclear testing area in the Pacific had apparently been overlooked by many party spokesmen. But by December, in spite of strong opposition from the National Party and from some Pacific leaders, Mr Kirk had confirmed that a frigate would, in fact, be sent, and that a Cabinet minister would sail with it.

Following the announcement by Mr Kirk of his Cabinet, he suggested that a two-tier Cabinet might well evolve from the allotment of portfolios.

For too long, he said, ministers had been expected to carry too big a burden, and the apparent overlapping in some fields was designed to spread the burden.

Mr Kirk himself took the Foreign Affairs portfolio, and the move was more than just a tradition.



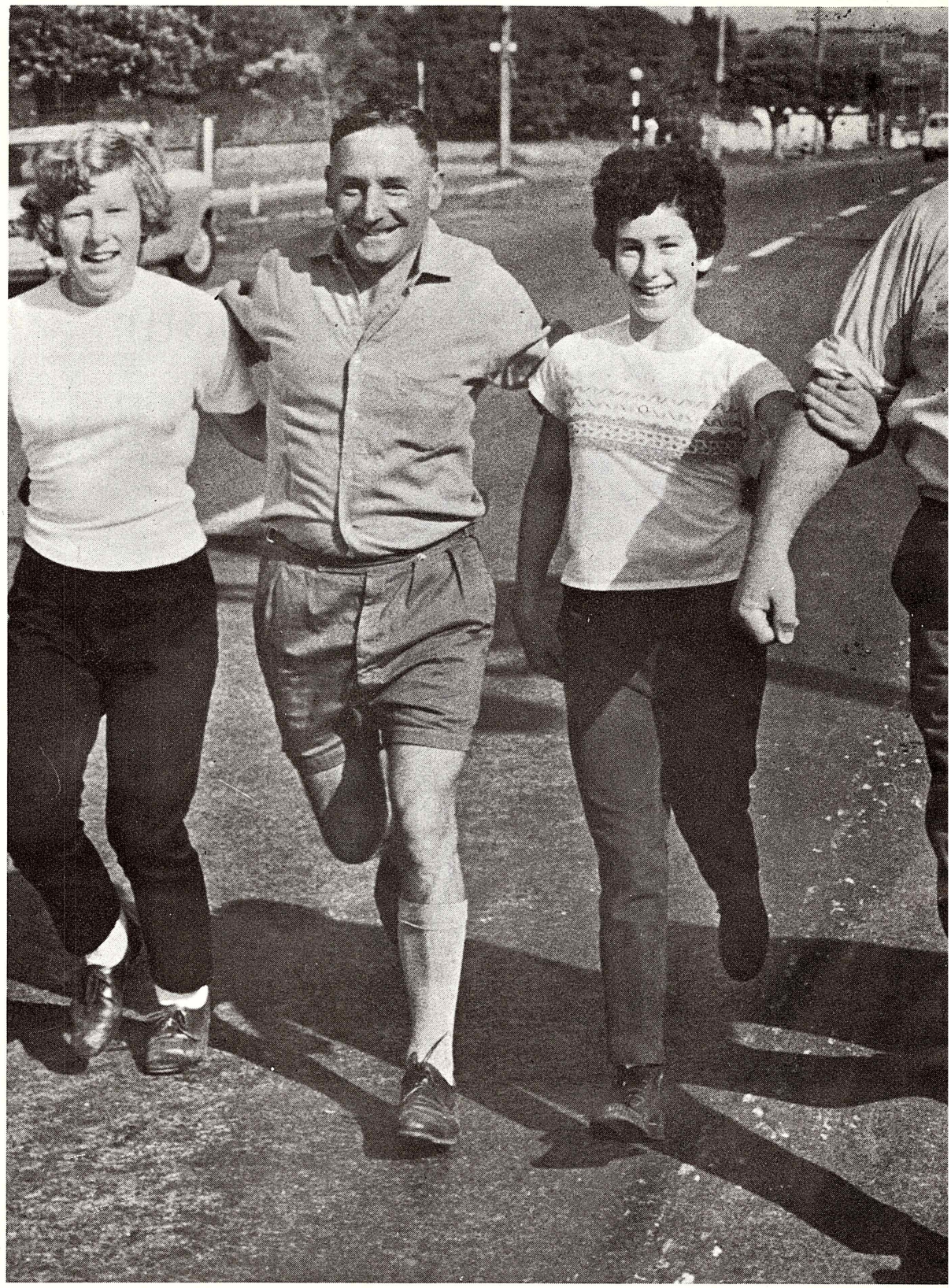
Fourth Labour Administration

Back row: A. J. Faulkner, R. Douglas, T. M. McGuigan; P. A. Amos, F. M. Colman.

Second Row: Sir Basil Arthur, R. J. Tizard, W. A. Fraser, H. L. J. May, C. J. Moyle, J. A. Walding.

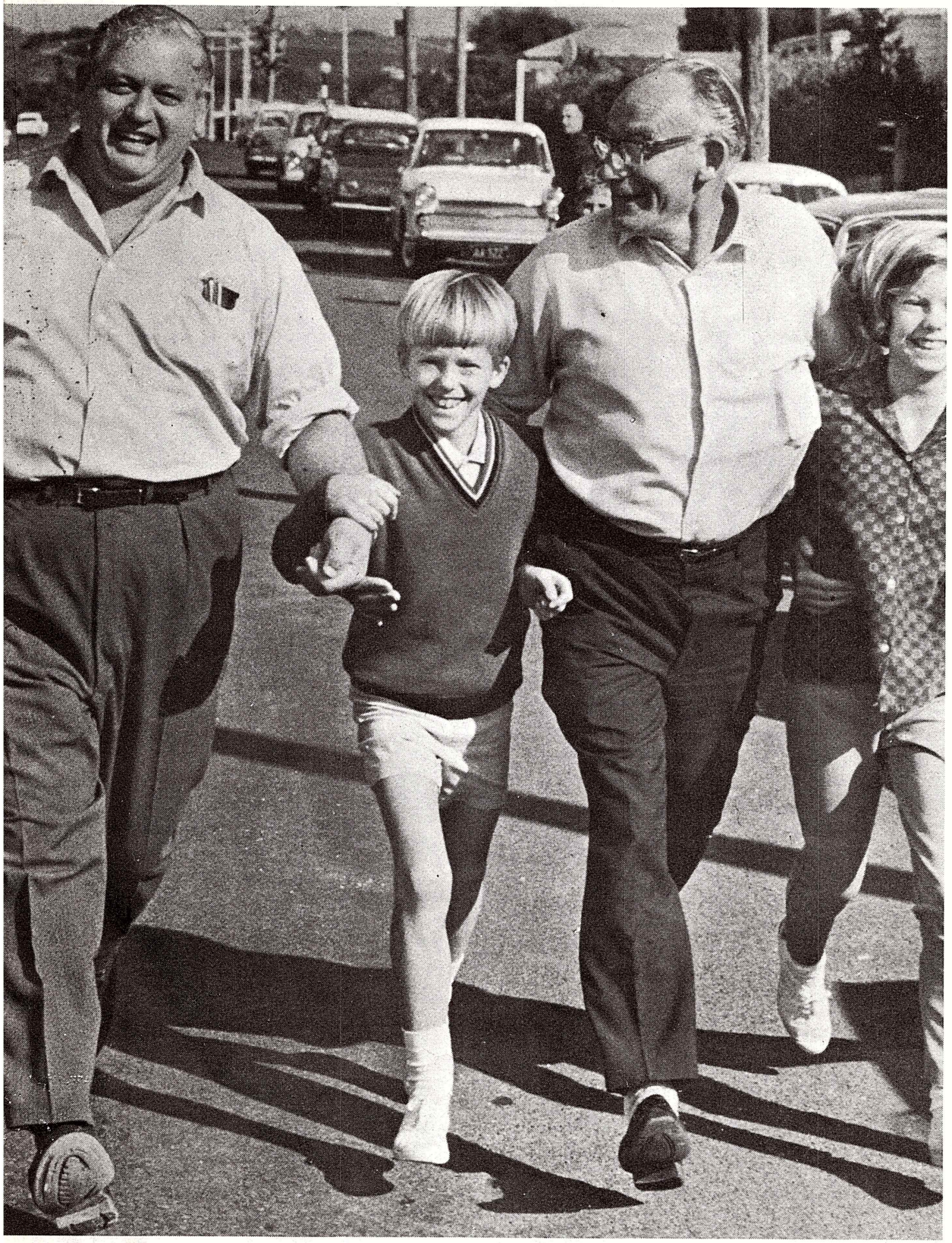
Third Row: W. E. Rowling, M. A. Connelly, M. Rata, A. M. Finlay, N. J. King, W. W. Freer, Mrs W. Tirikatene-Sullivan.

Front Row: N. E. Kirk, (Prime Minister), Sir Denis Blundell, (Governor-General), H. Watt (deputy Prime Minister);



IN 1969: WALK FOR CHARITY

A picture of health and energy
mile walk with a sprint. The occ
to Waitara in company with Mı
Plymouth and others. Mr Kirk
$500 to complete the walk in a



May, 1969, when he finished a 10-
'on was a walk from New Plymouth
M. Barclay (Right), M.P. for New
s backed by sponsors for almost
d to raise $12,500 for the YMCA.

A moment of triumph during what was to be his final appearance at the seat of his power: the Labour Party conference. With the aid of a walking stick, he made it across the floor of the conference hall, and received an emotional standing ovation.

Starting in the early 1960s, he had made many visits outside New Zealand, particularly to South-east Asia, and he did not like the poverty, despair and political corruption he saw there.

Even before he became Prime Minister, he constantly emphasised the theme that New Zealand had to live with its neighbours, whether they were in Asia, Africa or the Pacific.

The first Cabinet meeting of the new Labour Government in the second week of December, 1972, demonstrated what Mr Kirk had so often proclaimed during the election campaign — his concern for those in need. The Cabinet decided to give pensioners an extra week's benefit before Christmas.

It was a masterly move, made at relatively little cost, and it overshadowed several other important decisions made at the meeting.

These were a $10 million contribution for rehabilitation in Indo-China, $5000 for the United Nations trust fund on South Africa, details for abolishing compulsory military service, and plans for withdrawing the two New Zealand military teams in South Vietnam.

The new Labor Prime Minister in Australia, Mr Gough Whitlam, lost no time in meeting Mr Kirk, and the two Prime Ministers announced they would work together to oppose French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

The proposed Springbok tour of New Zealand was an early problem for the new Prime Minister, and when he made it clear that there would be no tour he was charged with breaking an election campaign promise.

Mr Kirk, however, had never concealed his detestation of apartheid and his respect for the United Nations. In the view of many of his supporters he made the right decision but for the wrong reasons.

Behind the scenes, Mr Kirk made intense and protracted efforts to avoid having to interfere with the Springbok tour. The Labour leader took the same attitude to nuclear tests. At times apparently reluctant to embark on a risky exercise by sending a frigate to Mururoa, Mr Kirk sent the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Watt, to Europe, to discuss the tests with the British and French Governments.

He also announced that New Zealand and Australia would take the matter to the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

As it turned out, the Government's action in sending HMNZS Otago to the French testing area was a resounding success in terms of public relations, although it seemed to make little impression on the French.

Mr Kirk often illustrated his belief that tradition, etiquette and even, on occasions, the law, should not stand in the way of the wellbeing of people.

In March 1973 the Prime Minister read in an Auckland newspaper of a 45-year-old Tongan who had lost both his arms in a factory accident, had overstayed his entry permit and was thus an illegal immigrant.

In a telegram, Mr Kirk told the man: "Your determination to triumph over adversity and your courage are greatly admired. The Hon. Hugh Watt, the Deputy Prime Minister and member of Parliament for Onehunga has taken your case up with me, and I am pleased to be able to advise you that you may stay in New Zealand as long as you wish.

"Similar arrangements have been made for your wife to remain permanently in New Zealand, and the authorities in Nukualofa have been advised that your children, including your eldest adopted son, will also be accepted for permanent entry if they so wish. Every good wish for the future. Norman Kirk."

In the same month, when the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Mr Djemal Bijedic, arrived in Wellington for a 90-minute stopover, Mr Kirk scrapped the official plans, took Mr Bijedic on a tour of some of the bays, and showed him the panoramic views from the top of Mt Victoria.

The informality of the drive was in marked contrast to security arrangements surrounding Mr Bijedic's visit.

The fourth meeting of the South Pacific forum in Apia in April, 1973, showed a side to Mr Kirk's character that surprised some and shocked others of the Pacific leaders.

For a while the conference promised to degenerate into a slanging match away from the conference room. The fault lay with several Pacific leaders who made public statements outside the conference which did not reflect the decisions or discussion in the conference itself.

The situation was brought back to an even keel by the New Zealand Prime Minister, who delivered the sort of speech he often made in Parliament when roused.

While the speech initially shocked delegates because they had not expected such plain speaking from a Prime Minister, everyone was full of praise for the way in which New Zealand had saved the situation.

Australia had put forward a proposal for a meeting of Ministers of Labour to sort out issues raised by the Fijian and Cook Islands leaders.

Speaking forcefully and bluntly, Mr Kirk told the leaders that they were wasting their time making such a proposal after all the inflammatory statements of the previous two days.

But Mr Kirk went on from there to talk at length on regional co-operation — the sort of speech one might have expected from a man with many years experience as a Prime Minister.

In April, 1973, just five months after taking office, a public opinion poll conducted for the New Zealand Herald by the National Research Bureau

Please turn to page 44

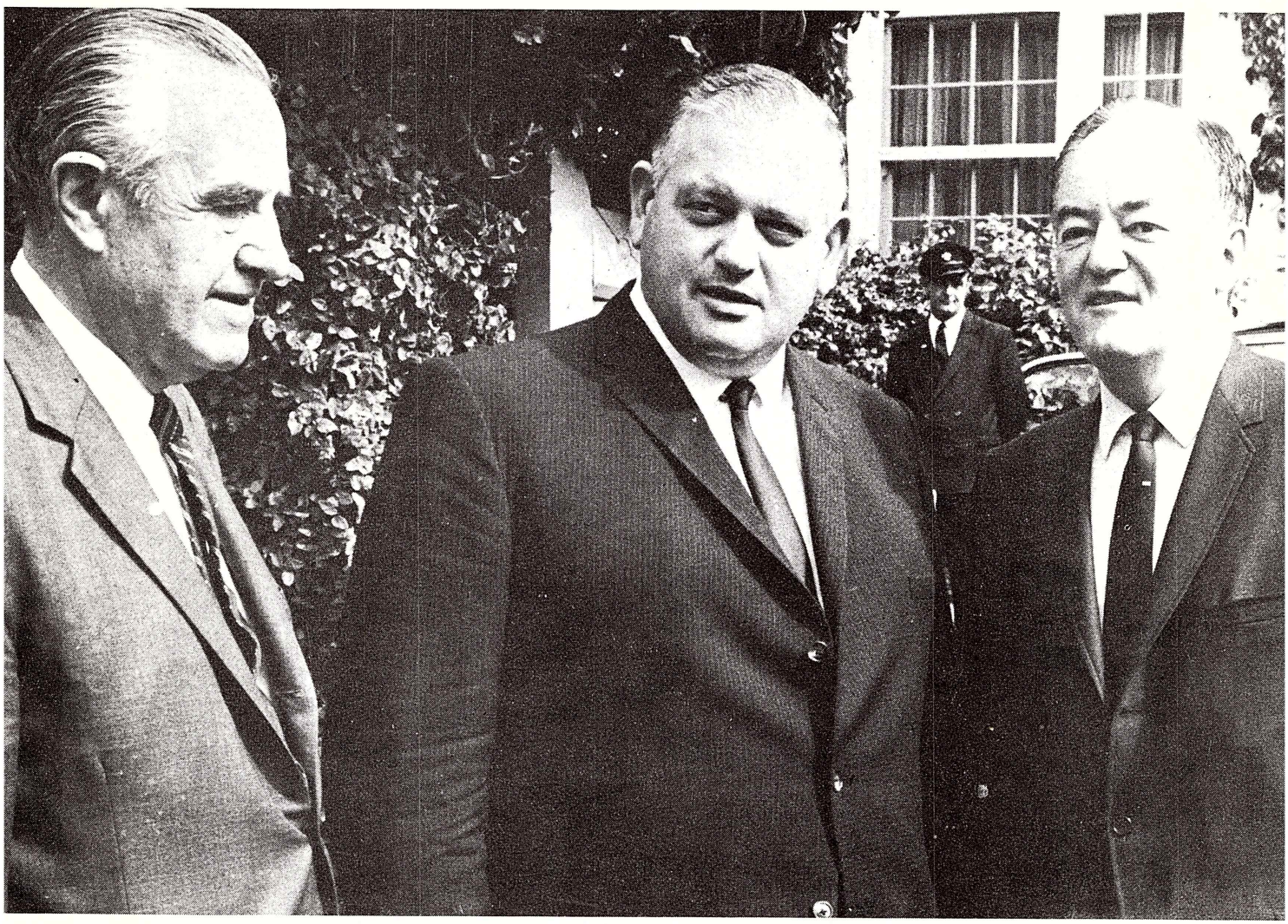
With world

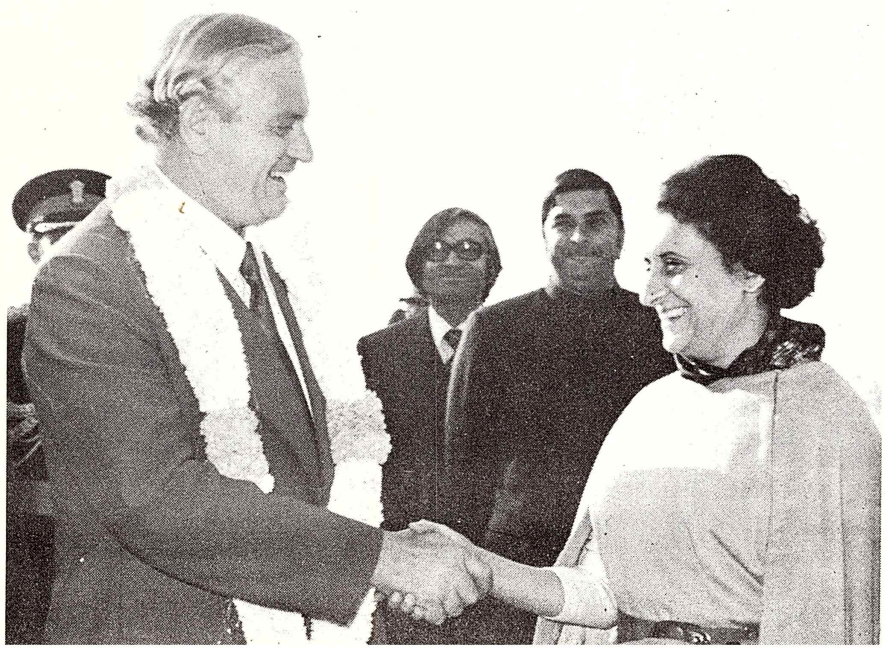
First meeting with Royalty

The Mayor and Mayoress of Kaiapoi, Mr and Mrs Kirk, being presented to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Christchurch during the 1954 Royal Tour.

leaders

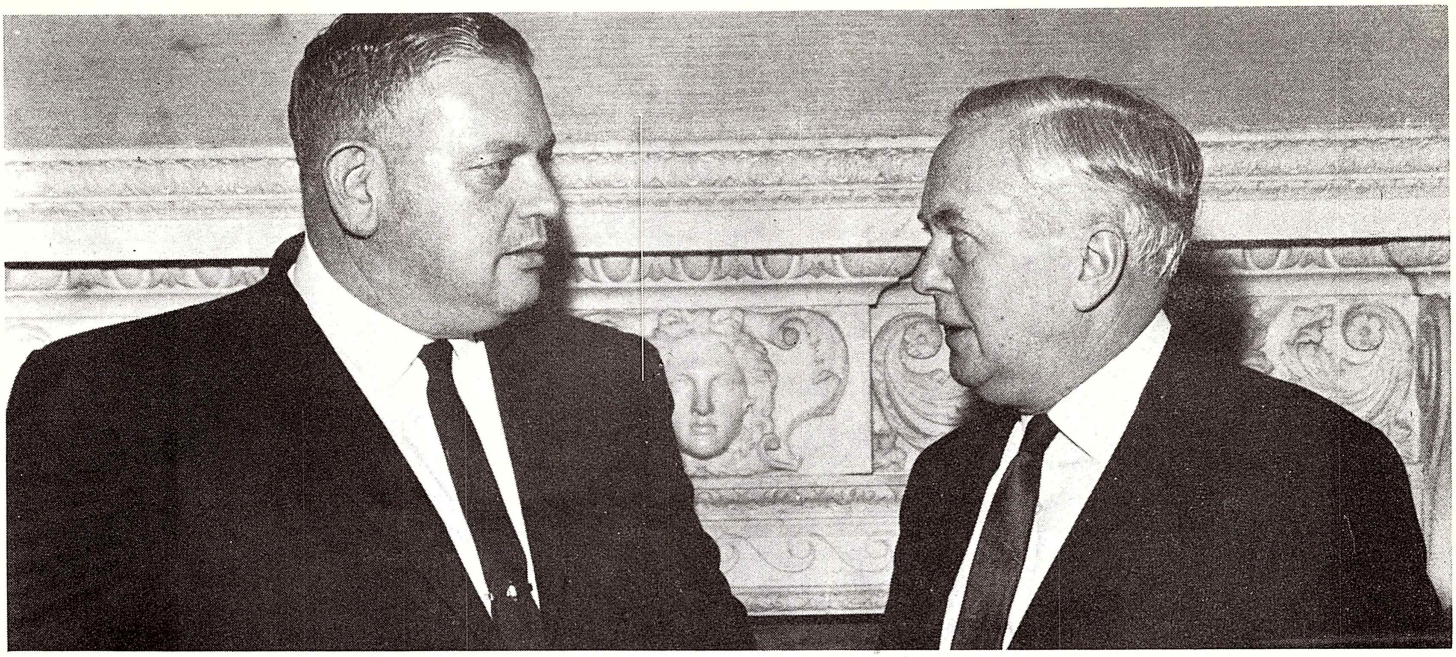
1966, as Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kirk chats with Senator Harriman and America's then Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey.





A warm welcome from India's Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi as Mr Kirk arrives in New Delhi for a five-day State visit to India in 1973.

Leaving No. 10 Downing Street with the New Zealand High Commissioner in London, Sir Thomas Macdonald, after lunching with the British Prime Minister, Mr Wilson, during a six-week world tour in 1968.



Face to face with Harold Wilson. Mr Kirk was a guest of the British Government during his 1968 visit.

With the Chief Minister of Papua-New Guinea, Mr Somare, at the start of his Asian tour in 1973. Mr Somare held Mr Kirk in high regard and was one of the many foreign Heads of State to attend his funeral.

A goodwill gift from one leader to another. Mr Kirk presenting a coffee table to President Suharto of Indonesia and Mrs Suharto, at Merdeka Palace, Jakarata, 1973.

ABOVE: No sooner had the Prime Minister returned from his Christmas tour of Asia, then he was meeting world leaders once more — but this time on his own ground. Early in 1973 Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands paid a visit to New Zealand as guest of the Government. Prince Bernhard and Mr Kirk are pictured at a State luncheon. BELOW: With the secretary-general of Seato, Lieutenant General Jesus Vargas, Wellington, 1968.

Minhinnick again,"Pardon, M'sieu, you're standing on my bomb!"

showed that both the Labour Government and Mr Kirk had performed significantly better than many New Zealanders had expected, in their first 100 days in office.

The survey, carried out in March, and before the decision on the Springbok tour, showed that 22 per cent of the total sample of 2000 felt the Government had performed better than expected. Sixty per cent said it had performed as expected, and 10 per cent that it had not lived up to their expectations.

Twenty-seven per cent described Mr Kirk's performance as better than expected, 59 per cent said it was as expected, and only eight per cent considered he had not lived up to expectations.

Nearly a quarter of the National Party voters questioned acknowledged a performance better than expected, and supporters of other parties thought Mr Kirk had done considerably better than expected.

In his first address to a Labour Party conference as Prime Minister, Mr Kirk hit out at lawlessness and described law and order as "an issue that revolves about the freedom of us all."

"No one is going to create a police state," he said, "least of all a Labour Government. No one is going to see the police used to intimidate anyone.

"But we will use the police and we will see that they have at their disposal the resources they need to make it safe for you and I to walk about as we will, where we will and when we will unmolested, and that the property we possess can remain intact and undamaged."

He told the conference the new Labour Government had made more decisions in five months than the previous Government had faced up to in 12 years. The General Election, he said, had been no "usual election." It had been the election of the "average people, the little people of New Zealand," who had cast their votes in their thousands for Labour.

"The third Labour Government was swept into office on a roaring, rising tide of popular resentment," he said.

"You cannot stir the sea of public opinion by a campaign teaspoon of cliches, slick phrases, sectional appeals or freak causes. You can only move the public deeply on issues that are important to the family man.

"It was the emphasis on human values that brought the people awake and brought them to endorse the proposition that New Zealand should have a decent, humane society."

Mr Kirk's speech was greeted by frequent and enthusiastic applause, and by two standing ovations from delegates.

In a major statement on New Zealand foreign policy, Mr Kirk said New Zealand would establish a firm moral basis for its foreign policies. It would follow more independent policies, and its starting point on every issue would be what it thought was right.

New Zealand would work to strengthen the rule of law, and the role of smaller nations in the United Nations. It strongly supported the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights and would equally strongly oppose all forms of racial discrimination at every opportunity.

"The Government which I lead," he said, "is determined to find and hold a firm moral basis for its foreign policy."

Mr Kirk attended his first Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in Ottawa in August 1973, a meeting which marked him as a negotiator of outstanding ability.

His presentation of the New Zealand case for a declaration seeking urgent negotiations to end all nuclear testing won him plaudits from Commonwealth leaders of every hue.

Mr Kirk also captured newspaper headlines in Britain, the United States and Africa for his performance.

During an eight-day visit to the United States in September, 1973, Mr Kirk addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.

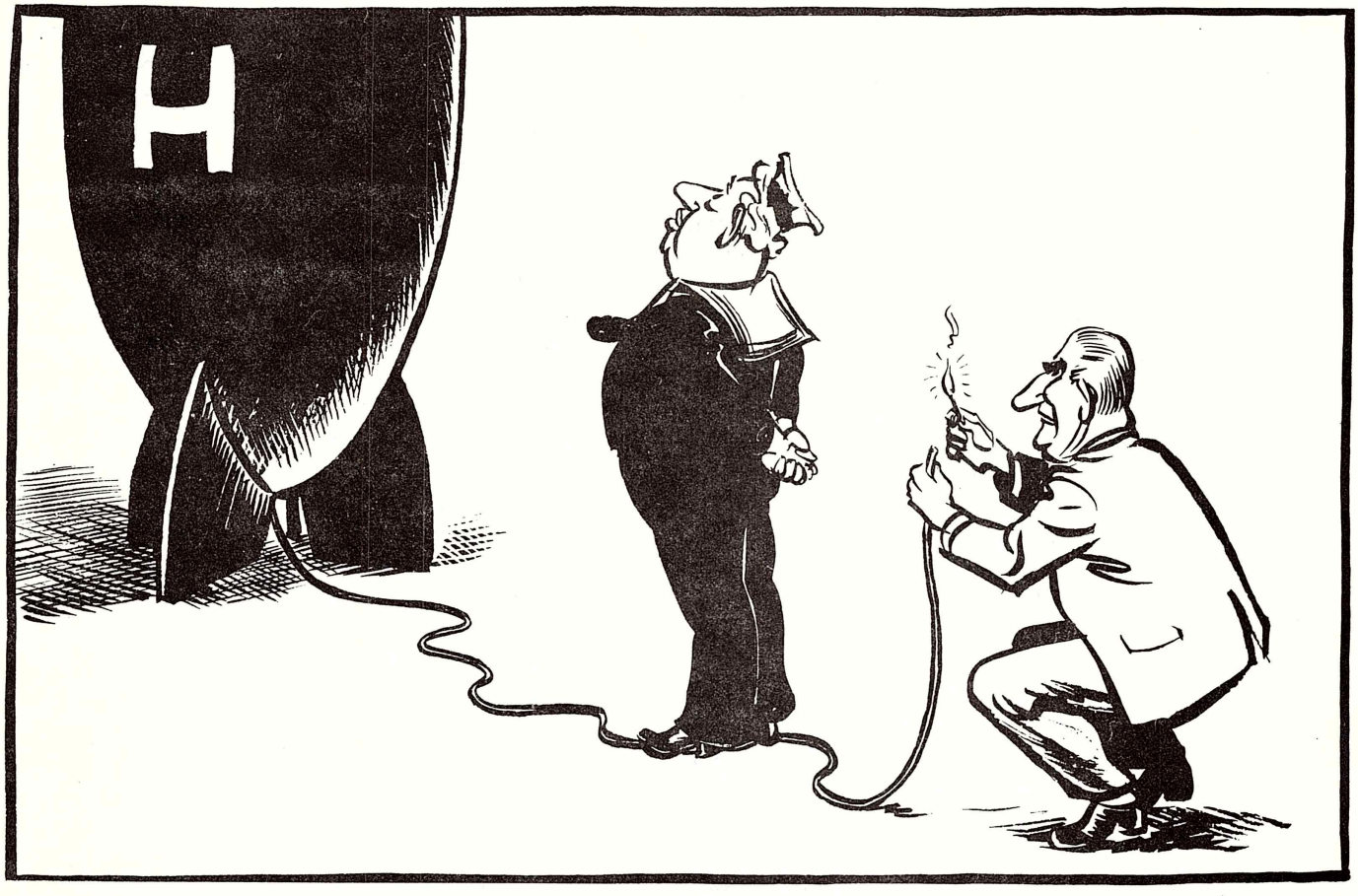
He urged small powers to demand a more effective voice in disarmament negotiations, and said they should begin their effort with a concerted call for the earliest possible conclusion of a treaty banning all forms of nuclear testing.

If no significant progress was made within a year, he suggested that the Assembly should consider calling a general conference to draft such a treaty.

Mr Kirk linked moves toward agreement on a complete test ban treaty with the possibilities of partial disarmament or demilitarisation on a regional basis where circumstances and geography made it appropriate.

The Prime Minister questioned whether great powers should continue to be looked upon as such merely because they had the capacity to inflict greater damage than any others.

"Of course if they acted under the United Nations Charter as protectors of the human family they might be so recognised," he said, "but in the last 28 years they have convincingly demonstrated their incapacity to rise to such a role. They have failed to match power with



responsibility.

"Might we not respond by questioning the scale of values which puts power at the top? Might we not insist on a different scale of values? — a human scale, a civilised scale — a scale based on belief that the truly great country is the one which shows concern for the quality of life of its own people and of its neighbours."

Mr Kirk's American visit included a meeting with President Nixon. An address to the National Press Club reflected an idealistic streak, but the New Zealand Prime Minister's evident sincerity wrung compliments from his listeners.

The Labour leader's growth in stature as a statesman was reflected in the amount of publicity accorded Mr Kirk during a visit to Australia in November, 1973.

When he and Mrs Kirk arrived in Sydney, the Prime Minister was met by a barrage of reporters and photographers. A national newspaper ran a 12-page supplement on New Zealand, afternoon papers gave full coverage of the arrival of Mr and Mrs Kirk, and he was interviewed on television by a leading Australian Broadcasting Commission political correspondent.

Addressing the National Press Club in Canberra, Mr Kirk said he foresaw a new era of co-operation and consultation between the two countries.

"I feel we will need to have special care for the relationships between us in the years ahead," he told a questioner. "I would like to have the habit of consultations more firmly established. It is much better that consultation be a matter of course than that it should be precipitated by the course of events."

There was particular scope in foreign policy, he said. Being small, New Zealand had a degree of flexibility that Australia did not have.

"Because we are unlikely to be regarded as a threat we can play the kind of exploratory and innovative role that might be misunderstood from Australia.

"Australia, on the other hand, has better access to super and medium-power thinking. Clearly there is scope for some very imaginative collaboration between us."

The opening days of 1974 saw Mr Kirk winding up a marathon overseas tour which included Papua/New Guinea, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, India and Bangladesh — all in the space of four weeks.

The tour was aimed at cementing New

Zealand's relations with countries in South-east Asia.

In Indonesia he discussed the prospect of bilateral trade deals to ensure New Zealand a guaranteed supply of petroleum oil.

In Singapore he re-affirmed his country's intention to maintain a limited, but independent military presence in South-east Asia, as long as it was wanted by the other Anzuk partners.

In India he promised further aid and raised the prospect of a South Pacific nuclear free zone; and in Bangladesh he discussed the development of assistance with the Prime Minister.

At the opening sessions of the 1974 Labour Party conference the Prime Minister was conspicuous by his absence. He was still recovering from an operation for varicose veins, and from a lung infection.

But even the mention of his name during the presidential address brought applause — and the president, Dr C. M. Bennett, told the conference that Mr Kirk had achieved more in the field of international relations in his first 18 months than any other prime minister in the previous 18 years.

The welfare of the Maori was one of his main concerns, and in his address, Mr Kirk said the Government intended to introduce revised legislation affecting the Maori people, because it had been plain over the years to those who were listening, that the Maori people wanted changes.

"We believe that the Maori people represent a vast reservoir of unused talent," he said. "Education is the key to this resource, so we have established a Maori and Polynesian advisory service to offer guidance to teachers."

Approval had also been given, he said, to train up to 50 bi-lingual Maori-English language speakers each year as teachers in primary and secondary schools.

The high regard in which Mr Kirk was held by Auckland's Island community resulted in his being honoured at the first royal kava ceremony to have been performed in New Zealand.

Mr Kirk, in Auckland to meet the Samoan branch of the Labour Party, was given the same privilege as would normally have been given to a Samoan king.

Mr Kirk did appear, briefly, at a later session of the 1974 party conference — and once again he drew a standing ovation with a 20-minute address.

He was walking with a stick, and had lost a lot of weight.

Speaking about the health of prime ministers, Mr Kirk said a weekly newspaper had said that four New Zealand prime ministers had died in office.

"But it forgot to mention," he said, "that they had to spend a fortnight pinching the last two to see if they were alive."

In his last few months, Mr Kirk's reservations about some sections of the news media began to surface, and he found himself at loggerheads with both private radio and NZBC TV personalities. Although he enjoyed a good working relationship with most journalists, he had frequently criticised the press or broadcasting when he felt they had gone too far.

One of Mr Kirk's most quoted comments was made in July, 1974, when, almost at the end of his tether following a rash of industrial action, he told the country:

" . . . I think, to put it mildly, the public has had a gutsful — and so have we."

As late as August of 1974 the Prime Minister, still feeling the effects of his earlier illnesses, announced that he hoped to attend the next session of the United Nations General Assembly.

He would then return to New Zealand for the visit of the Shah of Iran, and would probably leave immediately after the Shah's tour for the South Pacific conference in Rarotonga.

It was the kind of itinerary Norman Kirk had maintained all his life — but it was too much for one man.

Although he had run-ins with some individuals in TV, broadcasting and the press, Mr Kirk's relations with the news media were mainly very friendly. Here at an Easter Show he jokingly takes a razor to the red beard he saw so often on Herald man Mike Tubberty.

Illness strikes

ALTHOUGH always a big man who once weighed more than 20 stone, Mr Kirk appeared to those who knew him well and who saw him frequently, to be much healthier since he lost weight in 1971 and 1972. But Mr Kirk's state of health prompted a remark in the House as early as last February.

During a debate the Hon. D. S. Thomson (Stratford) said he was "horrified" to see the Prime Minister looking so sick and urged him to consult "the best physician he can find."

On a point of order, Mr Thomson was rebuked by the Junior Government whip who suggested the remarks were in bad taste and were incorrect.

Mr Kirk's health drew no further public comment until April, when it was announced that he would enter hospital in Wellington for minor surgical treatment.

On April 9, it was announced that the Prime Minister was in a satisfactory condition after a varicose vein operation.

His decision to undergo the operation in a public hospital attracted criticism. Radio talkback show callers complained that varicose veins were usually a low-priority operation at public hospitals and that unless the Prime Minister had been on the waiting list and had been accorded no preference, he should have used a private hospital.

The criticism was answered by a spokesman in Mr Kirk's office who said his name had been on a waiting list.

From entering hospital on April 9, he was to suffer 145 days of persistent illness, disability and frustration.

Mr Kirk was discharged from hospital on April 18 and after a weekend at home, was back in his office for the weekly Cabinet meeting on Monday, April 22. Even before back at work officially, he had begun calling on Ministers in their offices from April 19.

Ministers reported that he was having great difficulty breathing. It was clear to them that he had not recovered sufficiently to permit him to carry the tremendous burden of work that he took on as Prime Minister.

Mr Kirk seemed to recognise that he was still quite ill and remarked during private conversations that he was having trouble finding a place where he could get real peace.

So it was no surprise when he left Wellington on April 23 for a week's rest in The Bay of Islands, Northland. After his operation he had seemed to have trouble shaking off a chest complaint. There were rumours that he had caught a chest cold while fishing at Russell, but he had, in fact been suffering from that chest complaint before leaving Wellington.

When he left Northland he was carried out of the hotel at Russell on a stretcher, put onto an Air Force Hercules at Kaikohe and flown back to Wellington on April 30 for specialist treatment.

A few days later is was announced that he was suffering from a blood clot which had settled in the right lung after his discharge from hospital.

Subsequently the health of the Prime Minister never appeared to return to normal and became a subject for concern and inevitably, rumour.

On his return from Northland, a series of tests and x-rays confirmed the presence of the blood clot that his doctors had diagnosed. According to the official statement released by his office, the clot gave rise to a condition like pneumonia, accompanied by acute pleurisy.

Mr Kirk was prevented by his condition from attending the Federation of Labour conference, which opened on May 6, but appeared to be making good progress at home.

His illness also kept him from the first days of the Labour Party Conference, in mid-May.

On May 16, however, he was at the Conference — greeted by a standing ovation. His unscheduled appearance was against the advice of friends, but typified the Prime Minister's approach throughout his illness.

On a public platform for the first time since he went into hospital on April 8, he looked pale, gaunt, walked with the aid of a stick and had lost a lot of weight.

During a 20-minute address, Mr Kirk said he noted that a weekly newspaper had said that five prime ministers had died in office.

"But they forgot to mention," he joked, "that they had to spend a fortnight pinching the last two to see if they were alive."

Mr Kirk said that his doctor had told him he could not expect to take up full duties before the House resumed on May 28.

When the House resumed, he was there although walking with difficulty.

On June 10 Mr Kirk was given medical clearance to resume full duties. He said the blood clot was improving, although he expected it to be a couple of months before the inflammation disappeared.

His return to work did not quash the rumours concerning Mr Kirk's health, and his appearance and apparent sudden weight-loss did nothing to deter the speculations.

On July 6, the Sunday Herald referred fresh rumours about his health, directly to Mr Kirk for his comment.

"Let me say quite plainly, I shall not be retiring this year, or at any other foreseeable time in the future," he said.

"I have not the slightest cause to consider such a possibility in any way, shape or form."

Initially, when approached, he had commented: "Do I really have to take these sort of tales seriously?"

And a close personal friend of the Prime Minister said: "These tales and they can only be mischievously inspired — could scarcely have less justification. In fact, the clot on the lung which has been causing Mr Kirk to watch his pace, has now dissipated."

The Prime Minister had had two problems — to get back on his feet after undergoing surgery for varicose veins in both legs and at the same time to follow a closely restricted routine while a blood clot in a lung had been gradually dissipating.

In the early stages Mr Kirk was told that it could take from two to three months of rest and treatment for the clot to dissolve. Its dissipation had been achieved in quicker time than we expected.

The Sunday Herald had been told authoritatively: "The Prime Minister, like most vigorous men, has not taken kindly to sparing himself.

"While his legs were healing he could not stand for very long delivering speeches or making public appearances, and speechmaking was just not on while the clot was still dissolving. It was a pretty frustrating convalescence."

The rumours which had been circulating in Auckland and Wellington, shortly before publication of the article, had suggested variously, that the Prime Minister was suffering from leukaemia, that he was receiving radiation treatment for cancer (some stories said cancer of the lung; others said cancer of the liver), and that he planned to retire from party leadership (or from politics) this year.

The Sunday Herald was told there was no truth whatsoever in those stories.

On August 5, Mr Kirk was unable to attend the annual conference of the Post Office Association, as planned. The reason given was that he was suffering the after-effects of a minor operation — the removal of an ingrown toenail.

But from the middle of August it was clear to his associates that something was seriously wrong.

August 15 saw an official statement that Mr Kirk was absent from his office with "gastric influenza and the effects of a chill."

Arrangements were made for him to receive specialist treatment from the professor of medicine at the Wellington Hospital, Mr T. V. O'Donnell. In the meantime Mr Kirk was confined to his bed.

Medical examinations showed that the clot in his lung had either not fully dissipated or had recurred and that Mr Kirk was in a generally poor medical condition with indications of severe heart strain. He might also have suffered a mild heart attack about that time.

But three days later Mr Kirk rose from his sick bed and stood in the rain during a ceremony officially opening a church college in Palmerston North.

Shocked colleagues warned the Prime Minister that he should have more sense. Stoically he replied that the exercise had been worthwhile.

Still suffering from 'flu he attended almost the whole of a Cabinet meeting on August 19, but the following day the illness prevented him from attending Parliament.

He worked on Cabinet papers at home and a spokesman for his office, commenting on further rumours said: "There is nothing sinister about it — it's just 'flu, like so many other people have in Wellington."

His condition was said to be unrelated to his earlier operation or to the complications resulting from it.

But if that was the case, Mr Kirk had, it seemed obvious, not regained his full strength since that operation and parliamentary observers commented that he had not given himself a chance to recover from the earlier illness.

Colleagues, however, knew that Mr Kirk's recovery would be slow. The Prime Minister continued to drive himself and when he could not be at his office he took ministerial work home with him.

On August 26, Mr Watt indicated that the Prime Minister would be working only restricted hours for some time. Two days later the Prime Minister was in hospital.

A hasty reshuffle of ministerial portfolios followed the announcement that Mr Kirk would rest for six weeks before resuming his duties.

He entered the Home of Compassion Hospital, Island Bay, for what was described as a short stay. The following morning he was reported to have had a comfortable night.

In spite of exhortations from colleagues for him to desist, he took ministerial papers to the hospital and worked on them there.

A bulletin issued on August 29 said the Prime Minister had a comfortable night and was continuing with the complete rest that his doctors had ordered. There was no official indication of a deterioration in his condition.

Suddenly on August 31, during the late evening, the country heard of Mr Kirk's death.

As the word spread among Saturday night parties and other social functions, the initial disbelief gave way to sorrow that dampened earlier high spirits.

Norman Kirk, we were told, died of a heart seizure, just after 9 p.m.

Earlier that evening, Mrs Kirk had been visiting him and had left the hospital at about 8 o'clock. She was on her way home to Seatoun when the hospital telephoned the Prime Minister's official residence with the news that her husband had suffered a sudden heart attack.

Mrs Kirk returned to the hospital immediately, but the Prime Minister died shortly before she reached his bedside.

News of the death reached the deputy Prime Minister, Mr Watt, who had been attending a ball in Auckland, shortly after 10 p.m. With the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Muldoon, also a guest at the ball, the men and their wives left immediately without interrupting the festivities.

The Prime Minister had been in poor health for at least five months prior to his death but when it came, it was so unexpected that it threw the Labour Party into sixes and sevens.

No one in the Cabinet or in the Party, had contemplated more than a long recovery by Mr Kirk.

Sharp points in speeches

SINCERITY, confidence and humility were three of Norman Kirk's greatest characteristics. In public he generally spoke quietly, but with utter conviction. When the occasion warranted it, he could bellow like a bull. His considerable gifts of oratory were sometimes enough to move his listeners to tears, particularly when he spoke of human need and suffering.

His insatiable sense of humour was often unerringly directed at discomfited members on the other side of the House.

In his first major speech since the 1966 General Election, Mr Kirk claimed that the absence of Government planning and its selfish protection of profit for the few had brought New Zealand to the brink of economic disaster.

Government members, he said, had been observing a complete silence, and they fell into two groups: Those who did not want to open their mouths because of trouble in their constituencies, and those who did not want to open their mouths because they were responsible for the trouble in their constituencies.

Later that year, in a debate in the House, a clash over a motion on Vietnam created instant tension. The row culminated in the then Prime Minister, Mr Holyoake, telling Mr Kirk to "grow up" and the Speaker, the Hon. R.E. Jack, refusing to accept the motion.

The tension dissolved into hilarity when Mr Kirk replied to the Prime Minister: "I will grow up to a bigger size than the Prime Minister, before I'm finished."

Commenting on the 1968 National budget, Mr Kirk said simply: "Never before has a Minster of Finance said so much to so many that means so little."

Speaking to Auckland University students in 1969 Mr Kirk again hit out at Mr Muldoon when he told the students: "I don't intend to discuss the Minster of Finance, Mr Muldoon, because our ambitions don't coincide.

"I want to be Prime Minister — he wants to be the Government."

Mr Kirk often revelled in the give-and-take of election meetings. On one such occasion in the Auckland Town Hall in 1969 a voice from the body of the hall asked: "What about a national shipping line?" to which Mr Kirk replied: "We'll have a Labour shipping line — a New Zealand shipping line."

During a public meeting in Auckland in 1971 a persistent woman interjector was deflated at one stage when she yelled: "Say something original, Kirk." Quickly and quietly, Mr Kirk replied: "Yes — you're beautiful."

Tributes

A day after Mr Kirk's death, the Federation of Labour president Mr T. E. Skinner, spoke for many when he said: "Even now I can't really realise he will not be with us." There was a steady stream of callers at the Kirk residence, as personal friends, church leaders and diplomats arrived to pay their respects.

Members of the family rushed to Wellington from various parts of the country. Only Robyn, the youngest of their children, was at home when their father died.

Dr R. M. Kirk and his wife were in Christchurch; Mr and Mrs John Kirk in Napier; their son Philip was in Hamilton and their married daughter, Margaret was in Rotorua.

An aura of gloom spread over Parliament Buildings and over the country, as ministers and officials met to sort out arrangements for the funeral. While plans for the State funeral progressed, flags throughout the country were flown at half-mast. Telegrams and tributes from around the world flowed into the capital.

The Queen, heads of State, foreign governments, church and secular organisations, political friends and opponents and the ordinary citizens of New Zealand, sent their messages of regret.

The Queen, in a telegram from Balmoral Castle to the Governor-General, Sir Denis Blundell said: "I am deeply shocked to learn of the death of the Prime Minister, and send my sincere sympathy to you and to the Government and people of New Zealand."

Mr Kirk's deputy, Mr Watt, was deeply moved by the loss of one who had been a close personal friend for many years.

His voice breaking with emotion, Mr Watt said that New Zealand had lost one of its greatest statesmen.

"In particular, the loss to our party will be very difficult to replace," he said.

"Mr Kirk not only made his mark as an outstanding politician, but also as a statesman. He was recognised for his statesmanship throughout the world, even though he had been in office only a short time."

His political adversary, the leader of the Opposition, Mr Muldoon was quick to pay tribute.

"Ever since I went into Parliament," he said, "in 1960, Norman Kirk and I have been political antagonists across the floor of the House. In Parliament, you come very close on a personal basis to certain of your friends and certain of the people on the other side of the House.

"This is something that is not fully realised by people outside of Parliament."

Mr Muldoon said he had always had a great admiration for Mr Kirk's tremendous energy, his attention to detail in whatever he undertook.

"I believe that his early death," Mr Muldoon continued, "is a direct result of the pressures of Government which cause a man to carry on beyond the limits of his physical strength simply because there is a job to be done.

"It was clear to me over the years that he was tremendously dedicated to the people of New Zealand and particularly to the underdog.

"His great knowledge and concern for foreign affairs was also centred on the plight of the underprivileged of the world and it is in that respect that I believe his name will be remembered.

"He had something of a contempt for orthodox economic theories, and this came through both in Opposition and when he was Prime Minister.

"I know that, as with everyone in his position, his tremendous contribution to political life meant a sacrifice of family life."

President Ford described Mr Kirk as an eminent leader internationally as well as at home and a valued friend of the United States whose statesmanship would be sorely missed.

Mr Kirk's humanity, sense of justice and zeal in the pursuit of peace would inspire people every where long after his passing, the President said.

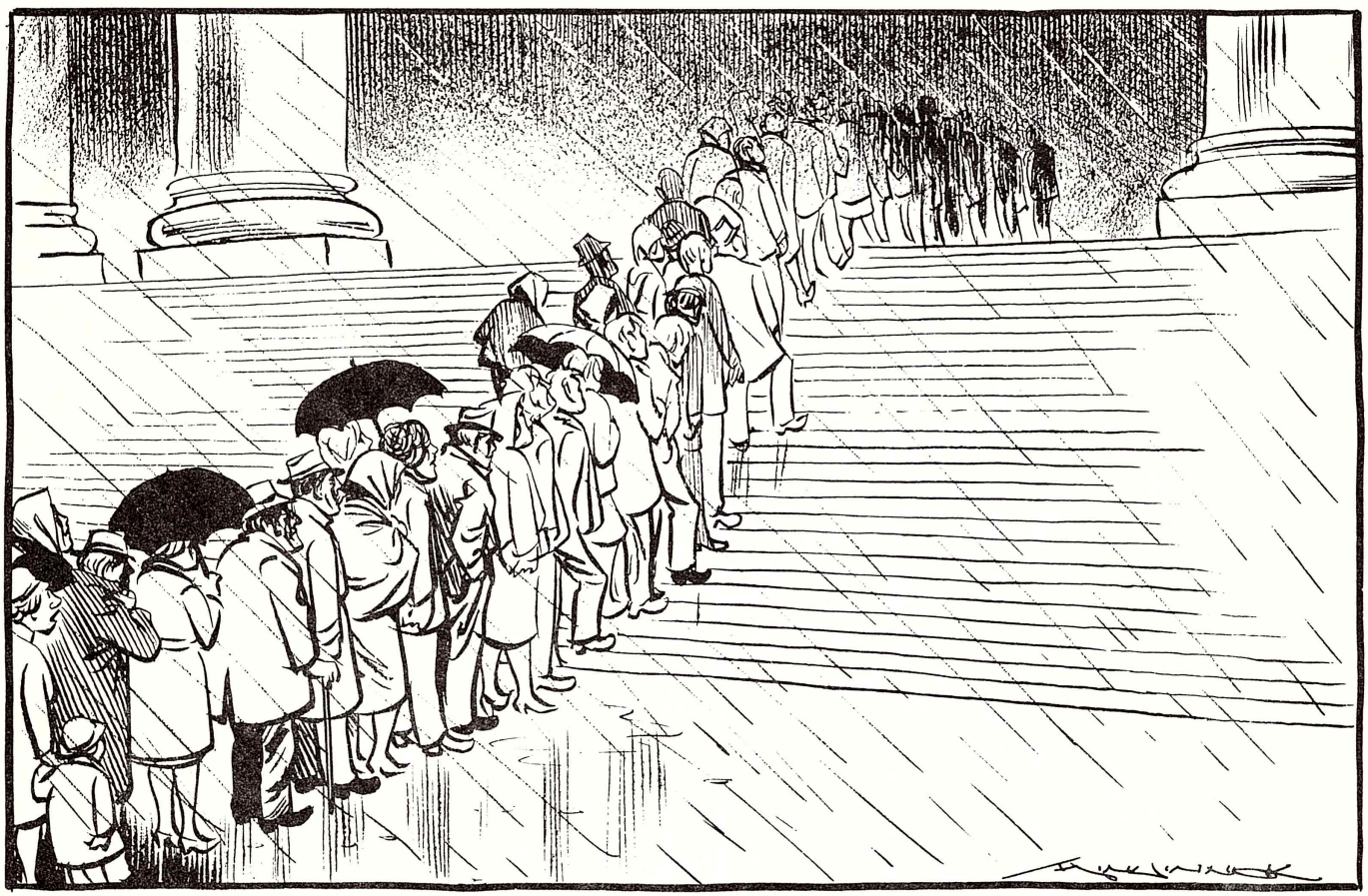
Dr Henry Kissinger in a telegram to the acting Prime Minister said that all would greatly miss the energy and vision of a much admired leader.

The British Prime Minister, Mr Harold Wilson, said he was deeply shocked.

"We have lost a friend and a colleague and New Zealand has lost a devoted leader," he said.

The Conservative Party Leader, Mr Heath, said he was grieved to hear of Mr Kirk's death and described him as a good friend of Britain and a strong supporter of the Commonwealth.

The Australian Prime Minister, Mr Gough Whitlam, said Mr Kirk's death was a tragic loss for New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific region.



"A rainy day."

"New Zealand has lost a great leader, Australia has lost a firm friend," he said.

"The cause of democratic socialism throughout the world has lost one of its greatest pillars of strength and sources of inspiration."

Other telegrams, paying tribute to the man and expressing condolences, came from Canada, France, Japan, India, Indonesia, Fiji and the Cook Islands.

The former Prime Minister, Mr Marshall, said Mr Kirk was a big man who grew in stature with the responsibilities of office.

"He combined strength with compassion, political insight with decisiveness in action and idealism with political humanity.

"He graced the office of Prime Minister. His death is a great loss to New Zealand," said Mr Marshall.

The president of the National Party, Mr G. A. Chapman, said he had learned of Mr Kirk's death with a sense of shock, "but more so because the news was unexpected." His death was a reminder of the unreasonable demands political life made on parliamentarians.

In Auckland a civic memorial service was held in Holy Trinity Cathedral, arranged, at the request of the acting Prime Minister, by Bishop Gowing.

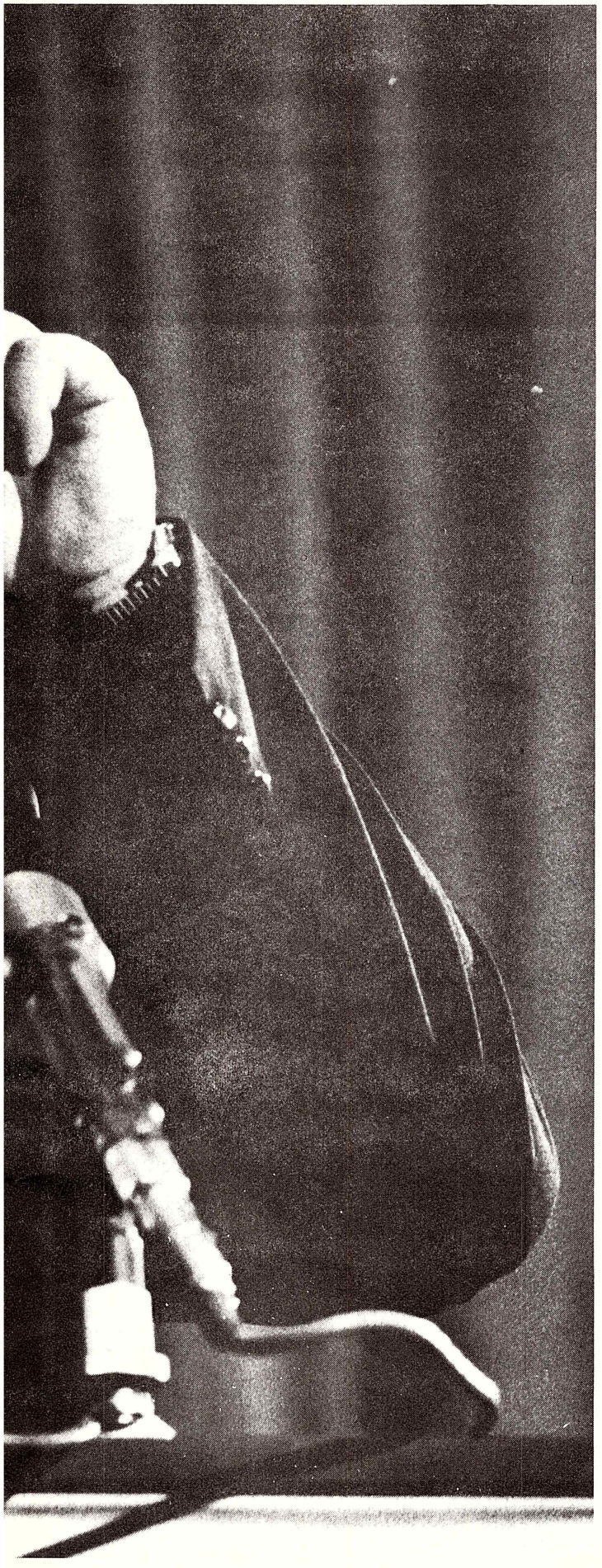
The Methodist Church Central Mission in Auckland, turned its normal Wednesday lunch-hour service into a special memorial service. Auckland Church and civic leaders added their tributes to those of the politicians.

Bishop Gowing, a few days after Mr Kirk's death, said that it was a tragic moment and hard to imagine how New Zealand would be able to face its increasing responsibilities without Mr Kirk's leadership.

"He was above all a man of great moral stature and for this New Zealanders were most thankful."

Bishop John Mackey, Catholic Bishop of Auckland, commented on Mr Kirk's sincere and humble manner.

"My impressions were of a man who was a natural gentleman and who was very gracious and had many natural gifts. His loss will be a great one to the country."



Big Norm goes down

From a genial giant to a clearly sick and frail man

He was a big, big man. Mr Kirk in 1971.

BIG NORM GOES DOWN

LEFT: November, 1972: Still healthy, but with the strain of the election campaign showing, he faced the press after becoming Prime Minister. ABOVE: March 1973, with Hugh Watt, and it was work, work, work, with Mr Kirk enjoying it. But even at this stage he was pushing himself hard.

BIG NORM GOES DOWN

His Christmas, 1973-74 Asian tour took its toll. Above. He is shown at one of an exhausting round of talks, in this instance with the Prime Minister of India, Mrs Gandhi.

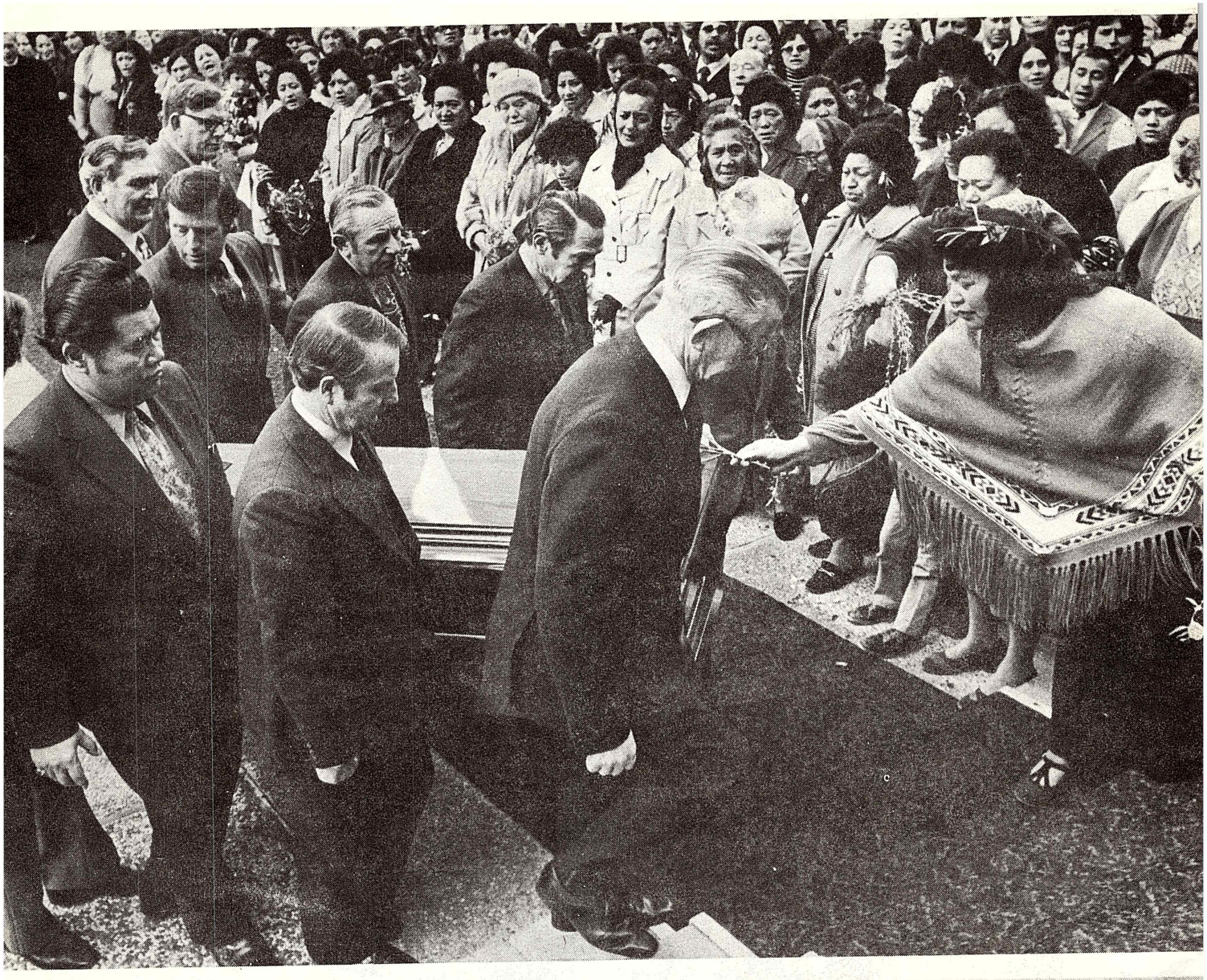
Still, his genial self — but note: The weight had dropped away. Carving a roasted lamb at a vineyard barbecue in Auckland with Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr Freer, the Prime Minister's loose shirt collar and slackly hanging suit had a story to tell. This was October, 1973.

The next picture gained of the Prime Minister was taken some five months later — and must have come as a shock to most readers of the New Zealand Herald, in which it was published. On April 19, 1974, Mr Kirk was shown leaving Ward 6 of the Wellington Public Hospital after operations for varicose veins. With him are Staff Sisters H. Wreaks (left) and S. Harper.

July 8, 1974, and the picture file on Kirk, N.E., ends. The Prime Minister, looking rather recovered, but still only a shadow of his former self, at a press conference.

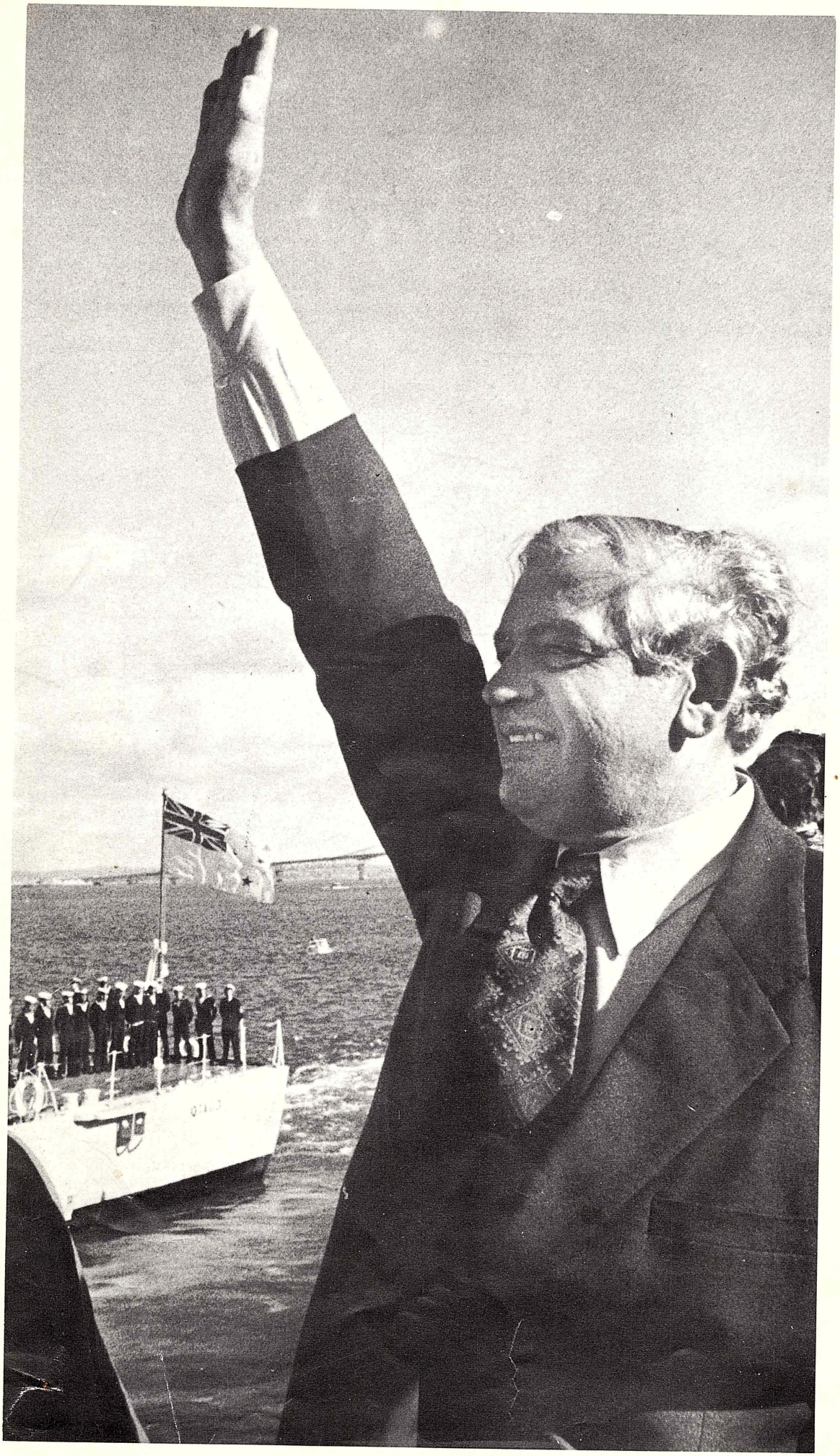
A nation mourns

This was the mood of the country as Mr Kirk lay in State at Parliament buildings. Long-time friend and deputy Hugh Watt leaves the casket to an Army guard, their weapons reversed.



THOUSANDS WATCHED THAT LAST LONELY JOURNEY: *Above left, a Maori mourner places a traditional sprig of greenery on the coffin as collegues carry Mr Kirk into Parliament. Above, he leaves the House for the last time, on the shoulders of Police, and flanked by his Party ministers and Parliamentary officials. Below left, in Christchurch, bare-headed Labour Party and local government members carry the casket in the rain to the Town Hall.*

Mrs Kirk on the arms of Mr Watt and her daughter Robyn, at the Waimate graveside.



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As we will remember him — Mr Kirk at Waitangi Day celebrations in 1973.